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DECEMBER 25, 1989 · $2.95

THE NEW REPUBLIC

Sean Wilentz on Saul Alinsky · David Thomson on Louise Brooks

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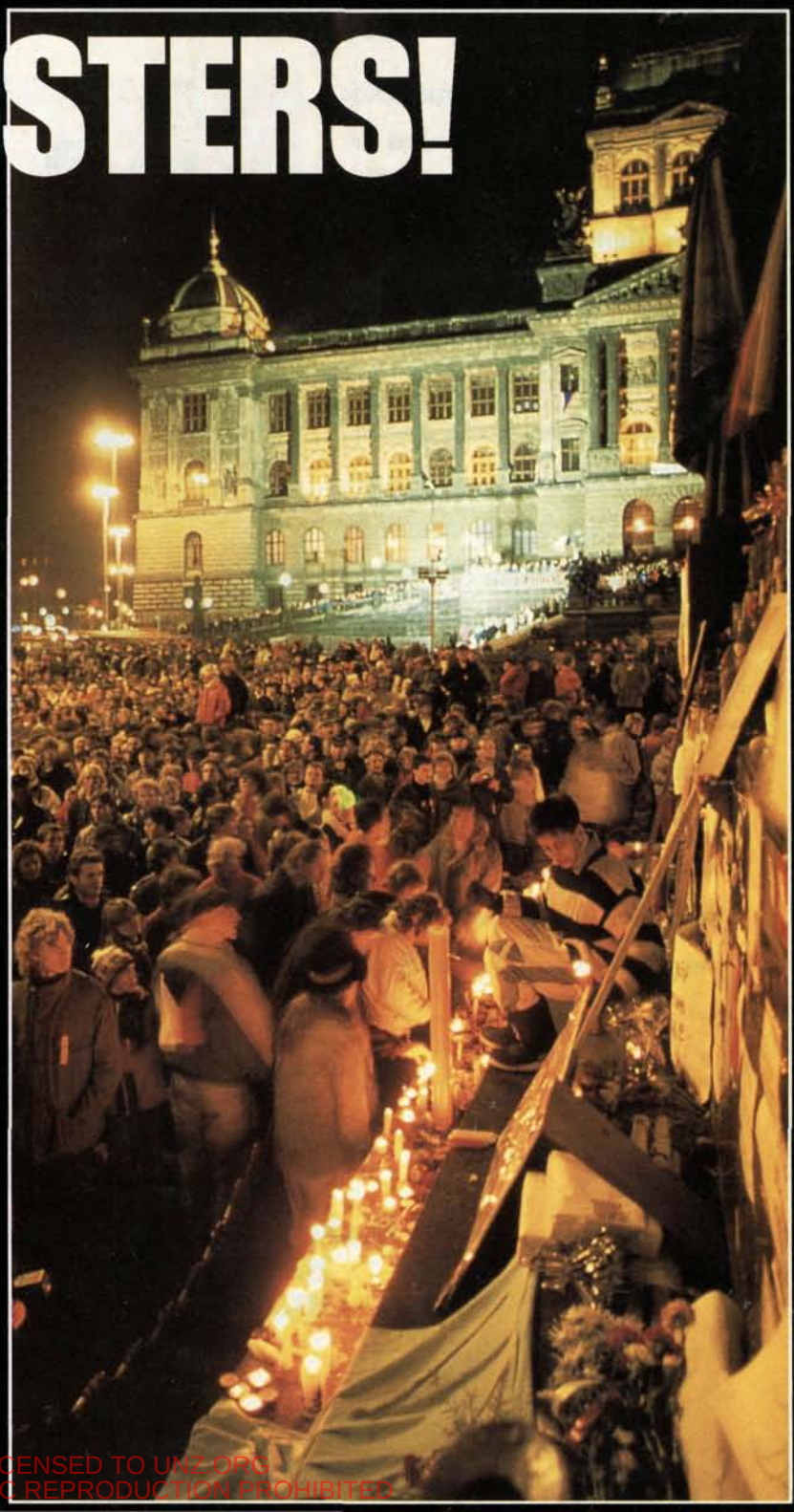

Budapest reclaimed
Tamas Aczel

The Czech opposition
Thomas Omestad

Discarded cadres
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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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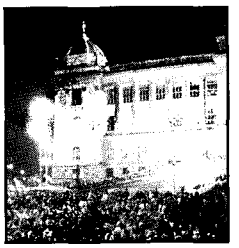

Cover: Wenceslas Square, Prague, November 24, 1989. Photo by Thierry Chesnot/Sipa-Press.

4 MICHAEL KINSLEY **TRB: CORPORATE LUDDISM** How businesses stifle technological progress.

6 CORRESPONDENCE Historical Lincoln, the wealth of nations, &c.

7 THE EDITORS **SUMMITS OF '89** Gorbachev meets with pope and President in the waning of an extraordinary year. **NOTEBOOK** Lear goes green, Rather gets stoned, &c.

10 CHRISTOPHER HANSON **ON THE HILL: PAY DIRT** Before going home, Congress voted itself a nice big juicy whaddyacallit.

12 FRED BARNES **WHITE HOUSE WATCH: STAR OF MALTA** Bush won the p.r. battle. Whether the summit was a substantive success is another matter.

13 TAMAS ACZEL **HUNGARY HEARTS** A return to Budapest, after 33 years.

15 JOSEF ŠKVORECKÝ **CZECH-OUT TIME** Spare a thought for all the apparatchiks and toadies whose jobs have suddenly become superfluous.

17 SANFORD J. UNGAR **PAPER BACK** The underground past and uncertain present of *Lidove Noviny*, Prague's once and future independent newspaper.

19 THOMAS OMESTAD **TEN-DAY WONDER** In Czechoslovakia, the opposition, sparked by students, has to make up its game plan as it goes along.

23 HENDRIK HERTZBERG **CIVICS, NICARAGUA-STYLE** Despite everything, it looks as if the Sandinistas are going to stage a free and fair election. What then?

26 STANLEY KAUFFMANN **ON FILMS: EARLY WINTER ROUNDUP** Atrocity, comedy, &c.

28 SANFORD SCHWARTZ **MARRIED . . . WITH CUBISM** At MOMA's giant exhibition, Picasso and Braque fight it out to see who can be more tiresome.

30 SEAN WILENTZ **LOCAL HERO** *Let Them Call Me Rebel: Saul Alinsky, His Life and Legacy* by Sanford D. Howitt

32 CATHLEEN CALBERT **POEM** *When Nights Were Full of Sex and Churches*

38 DAVID THOMSON **SAINT LULU** *Louise Brooks* by Barry Paris

42 FREDERICK BROWN **GOD'S DANDY** *The Road From Decadence: From Brothel to Cloister: Selected Letters of J. K. Huysmans* translated and edited by Barbara Beaumont

46 TIMOTHY NOAH **CALIFORNIA DIARIST: RICH BUT DUMB** If Beverly Hills proves anything, it's that having too much money is no picnic.

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FROM WASHINGTON

Corporate Luddism

Eight years ago I wrote an article about how the newspaper industry was trying to prevent AT&T—then a national telephone monopoly—from going into electronic publishing: the sale of words printed on TV screens instead of on paper. The newspapers argued that AT&T's monopoly would smother competition in this burgeoning field. I argued that the newspapers—themselves mostly monopolies—were just trying to protect their lucrative classified advertising from the advent of "electronic yellow pages." It was a case of misusing the First Amendment, and the unique political influence of newspapers, to smother business competition.

The papers got their way. The AT&T breakup decree of 1982 forbade both the national long-distance company and the seven regional Bell phone companies from offering any electronic information services—even their own telephone books. The field, far from burgeoning, has gone nowhere. The United States is behind other industrial countries—most notably France, where millions of telephones have small screens attached and sundry services, from the phone book to smut, are available. Newspaper companies, after a few failed experiments in the early 1980s, are not even trying to break into electronic publishing. Meanwhile their classified ads are safe, and brought them $12 billion in revenue (about 40 percent of their total advertising) last year.

Federal Judge Harold Greene, who supervises the AT&T breakup, freed AT&T itself from the electronic publishing constraint in August. But the "Baby Bells" are still excluded, and are lobbying hard for legislation to let them in. The newspapers and cable-TV companies are lobbying hard to keep them out. As Representative Ed Markey, chairman of the House telecommunications subcommittee, put it in a speech on December 4: "Monopolists including the Bell companies, cable providers, and publishers are lined up . . . ready to offer competition in the other monopolist's market while each seeks to protect . . . [its own] monopolistic advantage."

According to the *National Journal*, the big newspaper chains met in the boardroom of the *Washington Post* last spring to organize their fight. The chairmen of Gannett (*USA Today*), Times-Mirror (*Los Angeles Times*, *Baltimore Sun*, *Newsday*, etc.), and the New York Times Company were assigned to buttonhole key members of Congress. Every industry does this, of course, including the telephone industry. But it's a bit different when the owners of your local newspaper, or of the *New York Times*, come calling.

And newspapers have a unique lobbying tool. The *Detroit Free Press*, for example, editorialized a few months ago that letting the phone companies into electronic publishing "would place information providers—such as newspapers—at an unfair competitive disadvantage." The *Free Press*, owned by the Scripps Howard chain, recently got a Government-approved "joint operating agreement" with the *Detroit News*, owned by Gannett. This is essentially a special exemption from the antitrust laws for newspapers, allowing former competitors to operate as a business monopoly.

The newspapers say that the phone companies would be unfair competitors in two ways: first, by using their monopoly profits to subsidize their entries into the electronic publishing field; and second, by discriminating against rivals in access to telephone customers. The president of Cox Newspapers, David Easterly, gave a homey example in Congressional testimony a few months ago. A regional phone company, he said, would "charge Aunt Minnie $25 for $15 worth of telephone service, and use the extra $10 to set up a computerized Yellow Pages" of no particular use to Aunt Minnie. However, if the Government continued to ban the phone companies from this market, someone else would supply the service and pay the phone company for access to its lines. Result: Aunt Minnie's "$25 telephone bill might be reduced to $12."

Sounds great. But it's nonsense. We can only hope that Cox Newspapers offer their readers better economic analysis than they offer to Congress.

If a company can charge $25 for a $15 service, why wouldn't it just pocket the extra $10 rather than use it to run a second service at a loss, thus being unfair competition? This is especially true if there is an extra $3 profit to be made by letting other companies run this second service instead. Finally, if it makes sense to use monopoly profits in this way, what is stopping the newspapers from doing that very thing? Ninety percent of American cities have only one newspaper. Newspaper companies generally enjoy higher profits than telephone companies.

As the phone companies like to point out, many newspapers are heavily invested in cable TV, a business composed of local monopolies for which Congress has actually forbidden any level of Government to regulate prices. (Local phone companies, by contrast, are regulated at the state level.) Cable companies are free to sell their own programming as well as carry programming supplied by others: a freedom the newspapers ardently defend.

It's almost a hard-and-fast rule that when businesses ask the Government to protect them from "unfair" competitors in order to promote competition, they're being disingenuous. And the result is almost always to stifle rather than promote technological progress.

Corporate luddism is most common in the area of trade policy. Auto companies, steel companies—now, most shamefully of all, microchip companies—say, "Just give us a bit of breathing room from 'unfair' foreign competition, and we'll shape up." Invariably, it becomes an opportunity for complacence instead.

In a recent broadside, a free-enterprise think tank called Citizens for a Sound Economy recounts the tale of the "Biltmore Agreement" of 1933, in which the newspaper publishers—by threatening to lobby for Government ownership of the radio business—actually coerced America's radio industry (including CBS and NBC) into shutting down its news departments. Radio stations agreed to limit themselves to two five-minute news broadcasts a day, using information supplied by the newspapers, with no sponsors, no single story of more than 30 words, and the announcement: "See your daily newspaper for further details." The agreement (which, I'm pleased to report, THE NEW REPUBLIC opposed on First Amendment grounds) broke down within a couple of years as newspapers discovered how profitable owning radio stations could be.

The Telephone Company, back in its monopoly days, used its political clout and a lot of fatuous legal and economic arguments to delay for a decade—from the mid-1960s until the mid-1970s—the widespread use of communications satellite technology. AT&T was concerned to protect its monopoly and its huge investment in underground and underwater cables.

It is now almost a decade since the newspaper industry began suppressing its major competitor in the name of competition. In that decade, electronic publishing has gone almost nowhere. Who knows? If competition had been allowed to flourish, we might even have had the crucial innovation by now: a screen you can take to the bathroom.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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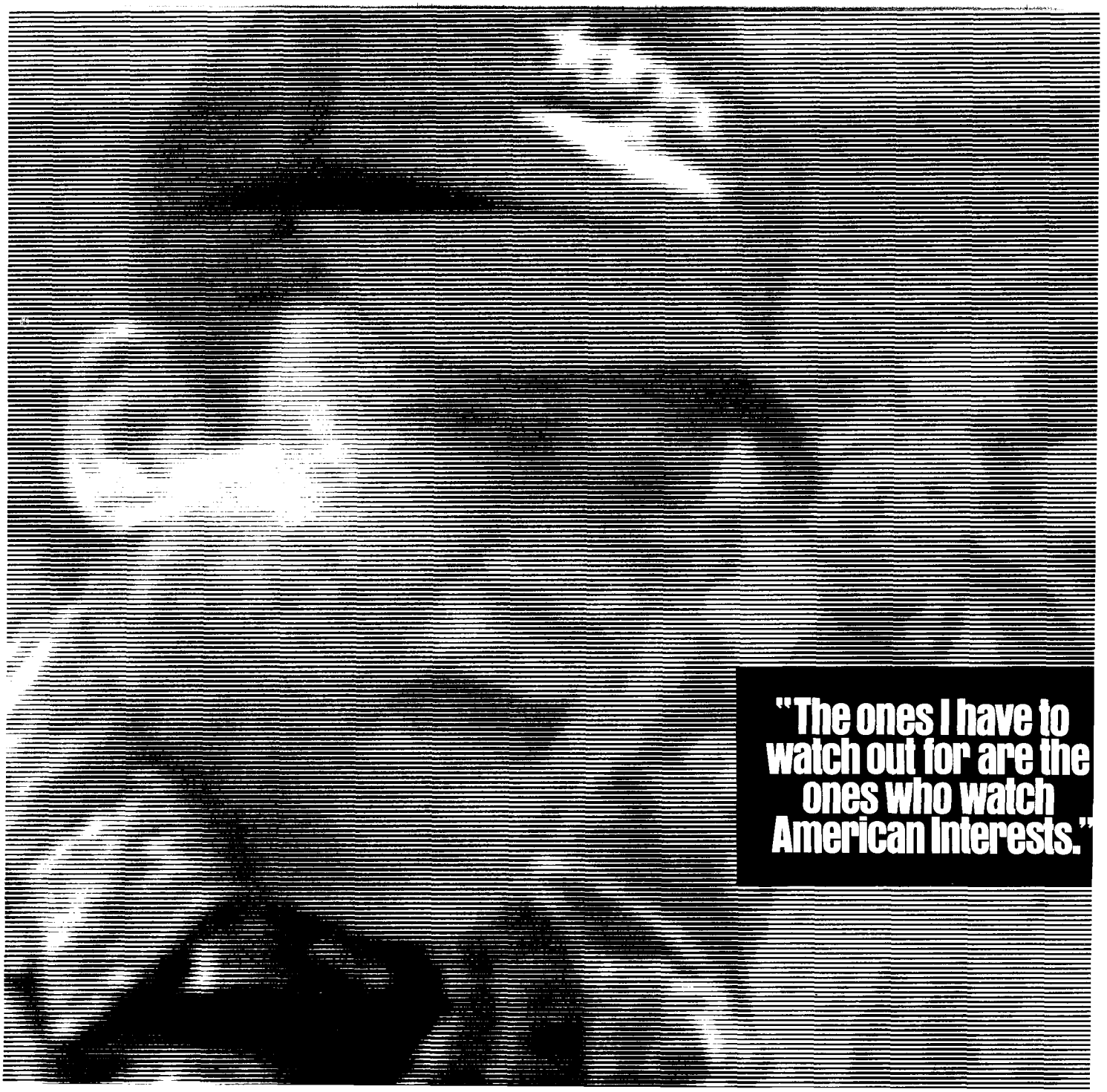

Watch out, Manuel. There's one television program that digs deep into global issues with an eye on what's really at stake for Americans.

It's called *American Interests.*

The range of topics is sweeping—from glasnost to global warming, from burgeoning democracy in Eastern Europe to burdening debts in Latin America.

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Consult your TV listings for time and channel. But watch out. Because the ones who watch *American Interests* are the ones who get listened to.

Watch American Interests.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Lincoln memorabilia

To the editors:

In "To the Gettysburg Station" (November 20), Andrew Delbanco excludes a bit of information that never seems to be inserted into accounts of the Emancipation Proclamation. If Lincoln issued the proclamation despite the objections of some Cabinet members, then he had not communicated an assurance obtained from a highly reliable source that one border state, Kentucky, would not secede.

Lincoln sent Cassius M. Clay, Major General of Volunteers and a native of Richmond, Kentucky, to meet with members of the Kentucky legislature. Clay arrived on August 27 as the President's special emissary, spoke to the General Assembly and with legislators. Upon his return to Washington, he reported to Lincoln that the loyal element of Kentucky would support an emancipation effort that protected their property interests. (Clay, a leading abolitionist and the person who nominated Lincoln for the Presidency, returned to St. Petersburg soon afterward as minister to Russia, where he was later strategic to the purchase of Alaska.) The President must have been confident enough to proceed with plans for the Emancipation Proclamation. The loss of Kentucky would have been a serious hindrance to Union military goals and to the Lincoln Administration as an effective Government.

PAUL ROMINGER
St. Simons Island, Georgia

To the editors:

Andrew Delbanco leaves some historical nits to be picked. James Buchanan, described as one "who had helped steer the Kansas-Nebraska Act through Congress," was out of the country serving as minister to Great Britain at the time. Indeed, his being untainted by the Kansas-Nebraska imbroglio added to his availability for the Presidential nomination in 1856. Also, Lewis Cass, identified as an "Ohio Senator," was a Michigan resident (though he had briefly lived in Ohio before the War of 1812).

Delbanco calls Thomas Jefferson "Lincoln's hero," and suggests thereby that Lincoln shared Jefferson's views on slavery. Yet it was not Jefferson but Henry Clay that Lincoln called "my beau ideal of a statesman." Jefferson was, in fact, widely distrusted by Republicans as the author of the Kentucky Resolutions of 1798, which (along with Madison's Virginia Resolutions) formulated the intellectual and constitutional case later employed by the secessionists. Lincoln's occasional invocation of Jefferson was in much the same spirit as Dan Quayle's allusions to Kennedy—to appropriate a patron saint of the opposition for his own party's cause.

Finally, Delbanco asks, "What will come next?" and answers, "I think . . . we are likely to see a resurgence of interest in Lincoln the tactician." As far as professional historians are concerned, this prophecy comes some 30 years too late.

ALLAN PESKIN
Cleveland, Ohio

Andrew Delbanco replies:

Mr. Peskin is right about Cass and Buchanan. But there was room in Lincoln's heart for both Clay and Jefferson, "who was, is, and perhaps will continue to be, the most distinguished politician in our history." Lincoln believed this because Jefferson "had the coolness, forecast, and capacity to introduce into a merely revolutionary document, an abstract truth, applicable to all men and all times, and so to embalm it there, that to-day, and in all coming days, it shall be a rebuke and a stumbling-block to the very harbingers of re-appearing tyranny and oppression."

If Lloyd Bentsen called Quayle on his fondness for Kennedy comparisons, Lincoln had this to say to Stephen Douglas: "I will offer the highest premium in my power to Judge Douglas if he will show that he, in all his life, ever uttered a sentiment at all akin to that of Jefferson," to which the crowd replied with cries of "Hit him again," "good," "good."

Policy and prosperity

To the editors:

To argue that the fault for underdevelopment lies with people, not policies, does not do justice to the facts ("Rich Country, Poor Country" by David Landes, November 20). East Asia's success story began between 1960 and 1965, when the basic policies of that region shifted away from the idol of self-sufficiency toward an export orientation, an openness to foreign influences, and free enterprise. Simultaneously, the governments of these areas introduced measures to encourage productive savings, to create a "meritocracy," to establish a comprehensive educational system, and to curb inflation and corruption. Only then did East Asia achieve an astonishing growth rate of nine percent a year in GNP, Japan become the world's biggest creditor, and Singapore cut its infant mortality rate below America's. Policies changed while an ineffable "Confucian ethic" and "intractable human factors" remained relatively unaltered.

It is a mistake to assume that many countries, the "hard cases," will fail to emulate the success stories. Thailand and Malaysia have consciously "Looked East" to Japan and Korea for ideas and capital. (Thailand displaced its traditional agricultural exports with industrial exports and has achieved the highest growth in the world—ten percent annually.) Thailand is a Buddhist monarchy and Malaysia is an officially Muslim nation—far different from the cultures that produced the East Asian "miracle." Policies, not particular cultures, have made the great difference between rich and poor countries. With sufficient political will, there is no reason why the poorer regions cannot copy East and Southeast Asia.

WILLIAM MCCORD
New York, New York

Construction slight

To the editors:

In the November 27 Notebook, you attribute to me a statement that I did not make, and miss the point of the opposition to Debra Bowland's nomination to head the Department of Labor's wage and hour division. You incorrectly ascribe to me a condescending sexist attitude of "keep out of the construction business, sweetie." To the contrary, as author of the Nontraditional Employment For Women Act, which the Senate has just passed, I am committed to helping women get jobs in construction and other non-traditional better-paying jobs.

I did not suggest to Bowland that she might be an appropriate choice for the Women's Bureau. What I did say about her was that a person who displays such hostility to Government involvement in wage determinations has no business running the agency responsible for enforcing laws of this type. (Bowland spent several years trying to dismantle Louisiana's prevailing wage law.) I opposed her not because she is a woman, but because it's wrong to select people to enforce laws they don't believe in. We learned that sad lesson with Ed Meese, Brad Reynolds, James Watt, and too many others.

HOWARD M. METZENBAUM
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C.

Local shake-up

To the editors:

Bill Bradley's article on the political effects of the Bay Area earthquake ("Aftershocks," November 27) makes it seem as though the response to the earthquake danger in California was limited to the state level. This is not the case. In Los Angeles, we quickly began taking a com-

continued on page 45

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

DECEMBER 25, 1989

SUMMITS OF '89

Nineteen eighty-nine figures to be remembered as perhaps the most glorious year of the 20th century. It has been the year the long cold war ended; the year the ideas of modern totalitarianism went stone dead; the year the people of East-Central Europe began taking back the freedom denied them for generations; the year liberty began to flourish in the Soviet Union in a way that goes far beyond anything ever seen there before. And except for the martyrs in Tiananmen Square, the revolutionary events of 1989 have occurred without bloodshed.

At the center of these events—at their summit, one might say—has stood the extraordinary figure of Mikhail Gorbachev, who has emerged as a mover and shaker of history potentially on a par with Lenin and Churchill, Roosevelt and Gandhi. In the final month of 1989—as the rout of East Germany's postwar Communist satraps continued, as peaceful Prague crowds steadily forced the government to offer further concessions, and as the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies made ready to repent for the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia—Gorbachev went to Rome and visited the pope. That was a first: no Soviet leader had ever met with a reigning pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church. Gorbachev thus signaled the conversion, so to speak, of the Soviet Union from an atheist to a merely secular country. Given the long history of enmity between Catholicism and communism, the sight of the Soviet chief and the Polish pope whispering together in Russian was another stunner in a year of stunners.

The meeting later in the week between Gorbachev and President Bush was not a first. It was the 15th encounter between top U.S. and Soviet leaders since World War II. Nor was it the first time leaders of the two countries had expressed the hope that they could work together to make the era at hand one of long-lasting peace. But it was the first time such hopes could be truly credited.

But in celebrating the events that have taken place—the felling of the Wall and the advance of liberty throughout Eastern Europe—and the promise of East-West cooperation in the years to come, we can't let euphoria blind us to the fact that there is work to do to ensure that today's promises are fulfilled tomorrow. In post-summit statements, both Bush and Gorbachev refused to indulge in utopianism. Gorbachev said, "This is just the beginning of a long road to a long-lasting peaceful period." Bush said, "We stand on the threshold of a new era." Bush was not willing, under prompting from the press, to say definitively that the cold war has ended. That's all right. He'll have time for such declarations next year, when he meets Gorbachev to sign agreements slashing nuclear arsenals by 50 percent, eliminating the threat of conventional war in Europe, and reducing stockpiles of chemical weapons. Bush is woefully short on the poetic skill and dramatic presence that can make history live in people's minds. But that's not his primary job, which is to invent and execute the policies that secure the peace. If he delivers on the agenda he set in Malta, others can supply the music.

Bush, for much of his first year in office, seemed wary and resentful of Gorbachev's political skills. But once he saw that Gorbachev really meant to reduce the Soviet conventional threat to Europe, to get out of Afghanistan, to reform radically his own polity, and to let Eastern Europe determine its own destiny, the new American President adopted a new tack, one of assisting the processes under way in the East. Is Bush too cautious? Well, yes. We would prefer more generous offers of economic assistance to Poland, Hungary, and the Soviet Union—for instance, the readying of emergency airlifts and credit guarantees to tide those countries through food shortages this winter. But prudence is not a bad quality in a statesman, and the direction of his policy is sound.

Some conservatives are saying that Bush actually abandoned his prudence in Malta by pushing for the signing of a START treaty by next June. Former arms negotiator Paul Nitze argues that it's a handicap for U.S. negotiators to bargain under a deadline, especially when the Administration has yet to decide internally what its long-term strategic priorities are. We think, though, that it's fairly clear what those priorities should be: significant diminution of the Soviet first-strike threat against U.S. land-based missiles and the maintenance of the Strategic Defense Initiative as a much-

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reduced research program aimed at designing light systems to guard against limited attacks from crazed tyrants. It ought to be possible for the United States and the Soviet Union to work out an SDI protocol by next June that allows for limited testing sometime. Other issues that currently bar an agreement—such as the Soviet demand for severe limits on nuclear and non-nuclear sea-launched cruise missiles—could be severed from the START process. Of course, Bush ought to leave himself the psychological space to say, "Sorry, we simply couldn't get the deal we wanted." But signing a START agreement by June seems prudent to us.

Politically, the East-West climate has shifted so that the alleged Russian proverb so often quoted by Ronald Reagan, "Trust, but verify," can be restated as "Verify, but trust." Still, where nuclear arsenals are concerned, agreements need to be clear of ambiguities, so that political distrust does not develop in the future. No matter how favorable the atmosphere seems right now, the United States and the Soviet Union will remain, probably for good, nuclear powers armed with more than enough weapons of unimaginable power to be able to destroy utterly the other's society.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Prudence and realism apply in the area of conventional reductions, too. Congress naturally wants to slash deeply into defense spending in order to balance the budget and cash in a "peace dividend" to spend on unmet domestic priorities. The Administration itself has encouraged slash-mania, with budget director Richard Darman pushing for a five percent real reduction in defense spending next year. But reductions need to be undertaken by mutual agreement. We want the Soviets, for example, to withdraw forces from East Germany, Poland, and Hungary so that those countries can fully exercise self-determination. And we want to reduce the possibility that a successor to Gorbachev could mount a renewed threat. So Bush is right to press for an agreement at the CFE talks in Vienna next year as a major priority and not start advertising deeper cuts or big U.S. troop withdrawals from Europe. Someday we may be able to draw down from 325,000 American troops to 100,000 or 50,000 or zero. Someday there may be no need for a military alliance called NATO. But, as Bush said the other day, that's in Utopia. That's not yet.

We still cannot be sure that the change in the Soviet Union is irreversible. It seems clear that Gorbachev is pushing hard for economic liberalization and political loosening, but the odds on his success—if not his survival—are long. Economic conditions are worsening, workers are shutting down vital industries, and national and ethnic tensions are crackling, some with the additive of religious passion. Gorbachev may not be in charge two years from now, or he may have had to take on the role of nationalist despot to save his skin. So the United States needs to protect the security of the West and strike fast for sweeping Soviet arms reductions and freedom guarantees for Eastern Europe—but without queering the process by seeming to exploit the rotting away of Soviet power. On the whole, we think, Bush is carrying this off pretty well.

Even with the greatest generosity of spirit, no American President could "save" Gorbachev. The United States could not "save" Vietnam. It may not be able to save El Salvador. It has not yet begun even to think about how to save the millions in the American underclass. So there is no way to ensure the success of an unprecedented reform process in a country of 280 million people who have no experience whatever with popular rule or market economics. We can help. We are helping, especially by providing technical assistance in finance and management and by lifting trade restrictions as soon as liberal Soviet immigration policies are codified. Soviet leaders said in Malta that they did not want a "bailout." We should not embarrass them by claiming that we intend to "save" them. But whatever advice Gorbachev needs—in economics, democratic political organization, agriculture, transport, or non-strategic technology—we ought to give. We can't afford a Marshall Plan of grants and credits, and the Soviet economy isn't ready to ab-

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sorb one. But a know-how Marshall Plan is entirely possible.

Such help, naturally, would be contingent on Gorbachev maintaining his movement toward internal democracy and responsible behavior abroad. An attempt to crush democratic expression or self-determination by an Eastern European ex-satellite would mean an end to it. But if Gorbachev needs to suppress ethnic violence or food riots, the United States should not object so long as the extent of force is not excessive. The hard case will come if Gorbachev uses force to retain Soviet possession of the Baltic republics. Bush wisely ducked a question about this at his post-summit press conference. But the principle should be that we will help as long as Gorbachev is working to give maximum autonomy to those countries, leading toward eventual self-determination.

Now that a tie has been established between Gorbachev and Pope John Paul II, we hope it will be used to bring about reconciliation with justice within the Soviet Union, among hostile nationalities in Eastern Europe, and, as we suggested two weeks ago, between warring factions in Central America. There is danger that religion and nationalism—in the Ukraine, especially—could prove an explosive combination. The pope will naturally want to celebrate the legalization of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. He will want to resecure properties taken by the Communist Party and by the officially sanctioned Russian Orthodox Church. At the same time, he ought to help dampen tensions between Ukrainians and Russians. As in Poland, he ought to preach a gospel of peaceful reform and reconciliation of former enemies.

President Bush recognizes that the main business of redrawing the map of Europe, and writing its history in the future, will be done by Europeans. He has asserted his intention to invent a "new Atlanticism" whereby the United States would retain a military, political, and economic presence in Europe. Matching Gorbachev's proposal in Italy for an all-European summit including the United States, Bush has called for retention of the 35-nation Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe—the forum of the 1975 Helsinki conference—as the arena of future settlements. It seems there is a Bush strategy for Europe, after all. It is prudent. In the world of real-world politics, that is a high compliment.

NOTEBOOK

IS NOTHING SACRED?: Television producer Norman Lear, who started People for the American Way in part to combat the school prayer movement, has gone all green and holy. Stirred by the beauty and vulnerability of nature, he has begun attacking "secularists" and calling on educators to "nurture the spiritual imagination." Lear, reports Peter Steinfels in the *New York Times*, told a group of religion scholars in Anaheim, California, that he doubted human beings could answer the environmental crisis the planet faces without "a fresh examination of what we regard as sacred in the universe." Maybe he's right, but in line with these new views he's going to have to change his organization's name to something more appropriate. People for a Nice Day, perhaps. Or maybe just People for the Way.

JIVE TURKEYS: *Time*'s November 13 cover story on Arsenio Hall was a minor classic in the art of not getting it. Explicating the black idioms and gestures that Arsenio has brought to network television, Richard Zoglin notes that "Hall raises a clenched fist and rotates it in a circle, inspiring the crowd to respond with its trademark barking chant: 'Wooh! Wooh! Whoo!' " Even many middle-aged white magazine editors know that the chant is "Roof! Roof! Roof!"—a detail that escaped not only *Time*'s editors, but its vaunted fact-checking department. Maybe they've been watching too many "Sanford and Son" reruns: elsewhere the piece notes that "TV's hip host" has moved beyond "old-fashioned high-fives." Nor does he say, "Yo bro, slap me some skin, you bad dude." C'mon *Time*, let's get busy.

ACID FLASHBACK: Readers who objected to the article "What Crack Is Like" (TNR, October 2) may be interested to learn that Jefferson Morley is neither the first nor the most prominent American journalist to use drugs in pursuit of a story. A profile of Dan Rather in a 1980 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal* ("Soft Side of a Tough Anchorman") explored the issue in depth: "As a man who wants to see and hear and do everything, has he [Rather] smoked marijuana himself? Dan eyes his visitor for a full ten seconds. '. . . I obey the law,' he says carefully, then waving away the dodge, adds, 'I don't want to be coy with you. I have not smoked pot in this country. As a reporter—and I don't want to say that's the only context—I've tried everything. I can say too with confidence, I know a fair amount about LSD. I've never been a social user of any of these things, but my curiosity has carried me into a lot of interesting areas. As an example, in 1955 or '56 I had someone at the Houston police station shoot me with heroin so I could do a story about it. I came out understanding full well how one could be addicted to 'smack' and quickly.' "

FOLGERS IS RICHER: OPEC's caffeinated cousin, the International Coffee Organization, fell apart this summer. As a result, wholesale coffee prices have plunged from more than $1.30 to 70 cents a pound, their lowest level since the Depression, and are headed lower still. This is bad news for a number of poor countries, not the least of them Colombia, whose largest legal export is coffee. But it ought to be a boon to consumers. Instead,

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a can of the stuff now costs more than ever: retail coffee prices have gone up some 12 percent this year to more than three dollars a pound in most cities. The reason is that the big three roasters, Nestle (Hills Brothers), Kraft General Foods (Maxwell House), and Procter & Gamble (Folgers) constitute an effective cartel of their own, and are taking the opportunity "to restore margins," as one Nestle executive euphemistically told *Forbes*. The more familiar term for this practice is price-gouging. Seems coffee-makers no longer advocate the old-fashioned trickle-down method.

THE HOUND THAT CRIED WOLF: Greyhound is screaming bloody murder about the Americans With Disabilities Act, a civil rights bill that passed the Senate in September and is now pending before the House. The company claims that the requirement that it add lifts to new buses would cost a minimum of $40 million a year, and as much as $133 million in increased operating expenses. CEO Fred Currey says this burden would force Greyhound to abandon a number of rural routes on which it loses money. "The only alternative is to curtail or eliminate unprofitable service," he testified before the House Committee on Public Works and Transportation. One wonders why Greyhound, which is not a charity, operates unprofitable routes in the first place. But the figures Currey offers to support his case are as dishonest as his reasoning. He estimates that passenger and package space lost to wheelchair-accessible toilets would cost the company as much as $21,000 per bus per year. But as Greyhound executives are well aware, the law doesn't require them to enlarge bus bathrooms. Currey says the lifts themselves cost $35,000. In fact, they are more like $10,000. Greyhound should quit grousing and get on board.

ON THE HILL

PAY DIRT

By Christopher Hanson

Critics who fault the 101st Congress for its lackluster first session have overlooked one remarkable legislative feat: the enactment of a bill that will boost salaries of House members by nearly 40 percent—or, as members describe it, adjust their compensation for the sake of sound government.

Earlier this year House members retreated in panic when a proposed 51 percent pay hike provoked intense public opposition. So Speaker Tom Foley's leadership team did some emergency surgery on the initiative. It took a scaled-down pay hike (to boost pay from $89,500 to about $125,000) and grafted it onto a body of Congressional reform proposals—among them, scrapping speaking fees and other "honoraria," banning large gifts to members from special interests, and restricting the travel costs that lobbyists can pick up for members. Senators, evidently more skittish about the pay issue, eventually took a mere 9.7 percent "cost-of-living adjustment," but only agreed to phase out "honoraria" gradually. The resulting bill was christened "The Government Ethics Reform Act of 1989."

No member of Congress ever votes for a "salary increase." He votes for his favorite euphemism. Asked to comment on the bill's prospects just before the November 16 House vote, Foley replied with a trace of indignation, "It is an ethics package." Taking the floor to explain why he was voting himself more money, Republican Bill McCollum of Florida said, "This legislation is not about a pay raise. This legislation is about ethics reform." Democrat Steny Hoyer of Maryland offered his "strong support of this bipartisan ethics package." And Republican Joseph McDade of Pennsylvania declared, "A vote for this proposal is a vote for good government."

Some members argued that Congress actually would be getting no overall pay boost because of offsetting cuts in outside income. "This . . . really isn't a pay increase," Robert Dole declared when the package reached the Senate floor. "It is not a pay increase. . . . It is not going to really make a difference in pay. . . . Let us try to report it accurately, not as a pay increase. . . . There is pay equity, not a pay increase." It was hard to avoid catching his drift, but the argument applied only to prominent members like Dole who will eventually lose out on the high speaking fees they now command. To rank-and-file House members, it's a raise.

Polls showed that over 70 percent of the public opposed the raise, but never mind. Members cited the ethics provisions to claim that their "yes" votes would nurture public confidence in Congress. As the bill's Republican floor leader, Lynn Martin of Illinois, put it: "It will . . . restore a measure of faith that must be had between those who govern and those who are governed, for democracy to grow and for this Nation to prosper." As the debate warmed up, proponents lauded provisions to raise the pay of federal judges and bureaucrats, not the parts that applied to themselves. Virginia Republican Frank Wolf exclaimed: "It will allow us to keep top-quality people at NIH working on cancer research, and top-quality people at the FBI and at the DEA who are working to keep drugs out of our schools and off of our streets!" Of course, Congress could boost salaries for federal judges and crime busters without doing the same for itself, but somehow the thought never occurred to either chamber.

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Many of the bill's advocates pointed out that, with the exception of a 7.9 percent cost-of-living adjustment, the House's raise would not take effect until 1991, after an intervening Congressional election. Several members went so far as to argue that by waiting they were following in the footsteps of James Madison, who advocated a delay to keep representatives accountable. In a metaphysical sense, they weren't increasing their own pay at all. Texas Democrat J. J. Pickle declared, "Members are voting for the office, not the individual." He was re-elected in 1988 with 93 percent of the vote. Overall, House incumbents enjoyed a 98 percent re-election rate in 1988. Death removes as many House members as do the voters (six representatives fell to each between 1986 and '88), imprisonment slightly fewer. Madison may not have anticipated this trend.

House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt urged members to heed Edmund Burke's advice and not sacrifice their own judgment to the opinion of the masses. He implored members to emulate Lech Walesa (who had addressed Congress the day before): "We heard a hero ... who talked to us about courage and said there are times in your life when you have to have it, even when those around you are telling you not to do it.... Today is the day for us to be leaders, to have courage to do what is right for this body, for this institution, for this country and its people." Lonely are the brave.

But not that lonely. In the run-up to the 252-174 vote, House leaders quietly took steps to ensure that members would not be cowed by constituents or dissenting colleagues. First, the leaders delayed unveiling the ethics-for-pay package until just two days before the vote. This prevented Ralph Nader and radio talk-show hosts from stirring the kind of opposition they had aroused last January, when they had plenty of advance notice. Second, the House Rules Committee barred amendments to the bill, preventing opponents from forcing an embarrassing vote to strip pay provisions from the package. Debate was limited to just two hours.

Third, Democratic and Republican leaders forged an extraordinary non-aggression pact. Under its terms, the opposing party would come to the defense of a member attacked for his or her pro-raise vote. House members praised this deal as a statesmanlike effort to fight demagoguery, restore the reputation of Congress, and promote bipartisanship. "One might say this is almost as unprecedented as the breaching of the Berlin Wall," declared Democratic Representative Frank McCloskey. Let freedom ring.

CHRISTOPHER HANSON is a Washington correspondent for the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* and other Hearst papers.

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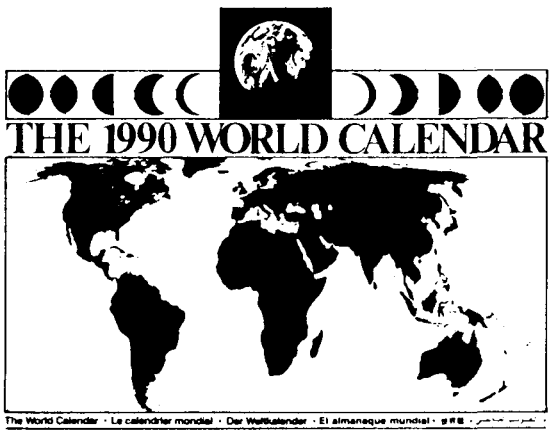

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WHITE HOUSE WATCH

STAR OF MALTA

By Fred Barnes

The moment of crisis for President Bush at the Malta summit didn't come when he went eyeball-to-eyeball with Mikhail Gorbachev. It came when his minions faced a mob of reporters with nothing to say. The press was desperate for information about the first Bush-Gorby session on December 2, and Bush aides couldn't help. Marlin Fitzwater, the White House Press Secretary, had plenty to say. But he was holed up on the *Belknap*, a U.S. Navy cruiser, along with Bush, Secretary of State James Baker, and National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft. High wind and rough seas kept him from going ashore to the press center to brief. Because Fitzwater couldn't make it, Gennady Gerasimov, the Soviet spokesman, agreed that he wouldn't brief reporters either.

That didn't stop other Soviet officials, including the glib, English-speaking Vitaly Churkin, from circulating at the press center with tidbits. Naturally these did nothing to enhance Bush's role at the talks. Since the second Bush-Gorby session and their joint dinner had been canceled because of the weather, the Soviets mocked Bush's idea of a summit at sea. The President's aides grew all the more alarmed when they watched Don Oberdorfer, the *Washington Post*'s diplomatic correspondent, complain on CNN's "Evans & Novak" that Soviet officials were talking but those from the open, democratic country weren't. (CNN was piped into the press center.) Reporters were left with one story line: Bush-choreographed summit washed out. This was a public relations disaster for Bush.

It was nearly 10 p.m., or 4 p.m. EDT, before the Bush contingent began a blitzkrieg of leaks. By telephone, Fitzwater gave Deputy Press Secretary Roman Popadiuk, who was at the press center, a rundown of the 21 initiatives that Bush had presented to Gorbachev. Then Popadiuk stepped into a hallway to brief reporters. He spoke "on background," which meant no attribution to him by name. (White House officials said the no-briefing pact with Gerasimov only applied to on-the-record comments.) Fitzwater called individual reporters. From the Holiday Inn, ten miles away on Malta, Robert Blackwill of the National Security Council and Margaret Tutwiler, the State Department spokeswoman, got other reporters on the phone at the press center. The Bushies succeeded in changing the story. It became Bush's proposals contrasted with Gorbachev's lack of a single initiative. Bush hogged the coverage and won the p.r. game at the summit.

This is significant. Gorbachev had come to earlier summits with surprise proposals that made him appear to be the dominant force. Bush, criticized for responding passively to the dismantling of communism in the Soviet bloc, couldn't afford to be upstaged. From the moment the Malta meeting was announced in late October, he was cultivating a long list of initiatives to drop on Gorbachev. White House officials insist that Bush chose them solely for their substantive value. Maybe. Bush also went to extraordinary lengths to keep them secret, which gave the proposals greater tactical value at the summit. Four days before the Malta meeting, he summoned reporters to the Oval Office to downplay the agenda. "So the surprise will be, if you're looking for a surprise, there won't be a surprise. That may come as a surprise."

Bush knew better. By that time, four senior officials—Blackwill and Condaleezza Rice of the National Security Council and Dennis Ross and Robert Zoellick of the State Department—had long since created a full plate of proposals. Bush had initially told them he wanted concepts, not detailed initiatives. "I don't want an ALCM, SLCM Mediterranean meeting," he said. In other words, the summit shouldn't get bogged down in the minutiae (air-launched cruise missiles, sea-launched cruise missiles) of arms control. "He didn't want it to look like Soviet-American summits of the past," an aide says. The four drafted roughly 35 initiatives, then pared the list. "These were all in the framework of a Republican Administration," says a senior official. "There wasn't one that called for disbanding the armies."

Bush hashed over the proposals with Cabinet members, but not their subordinates. He wanted secrecy. "This was not done with the bureaucracy," the official says. "He discussed it only with these people. There were no strap-hangers or interagency paper. That's why it didn't leak." The economic concessions—agreeing to start talks on a trade treaty and to bestow Export-Import Bank credits on the Soviet Union—were broached with Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady, Commerce Secretary Robert Mosbacher, and Trade Representative Carla Hills. Bush brought up the arms control initiatives with Defense Secretary Dick Cheney. And so on.

Not all of the 21 proposals were fresh. President Reagan had proposed in a 1987 speech that the Olympic Games be held in Berlin in 2004. Still, Gorbachev seemed (to Bush aides) riveted as he listened to the President's hour-long opening monologue. He took copious notes in a small orange book. When Bush finished, Gorbachev referred back to all but one of the proposals. He left out the Berlin Olympics. In Gorbachev's mind, Bush aides guessed, this presupposes a unified Berlin and a unified German. Gorbachev doesn't like the prospect of that, or even talking about it. Bush let the Olympics idea die. He was happy to settle for Gorbachev's overall assessment of the proposals as evidence that he's on Gorby's side in supporting *perestroika*.

Bush sealed his p.r. triumph by coming across as the

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ellow in command at his joint press conference with Gorbachev aboard the *Gorky*, a Soviet cruise ship. He vas friendly enough, but did not act smitten with Gorbachev the way Reagan used to. In Brussels the day ıfter the summit, Bush declined to call Gorbachev a riend. "I'll say this," he said. "We had a friendly conersation. . . . What happened was, I think he took my neasure and I took his, and I think we just feel more omfortable about our common objectives." I suspect-d Bush was merely trying to avert a headline ("Bush Calls Russkie His Buddy"). I asked senior aides if Bush, vho considers practically every European leader a riend, really likes Gorbachev. The answer was no. The elationship is cordial and respectful, but formal. "I lon't think it's fair to call them close personal friends," ın official said.

Bush paid a price for dominating the summit. He nade concessions. Gorbachev made none. A White House official said Bush had to reciprocate for Gorby's ›ig pre-summit concession of letting Eastern Europe nove toward democracy. When news reached euphoric Air Force One (as Bush was flying to Brussels) that the East German Politburo had resigned, Soviet expert Condaleezza Rice joked that the new Communist slogan is, "We're out of here."

Sununu argues that while Bush gave up something in ›nly two proposals, it wasn't much. Bush agreed to start rade talks before the Soviets have codified free emigraion and thus qualified for most favored nation status. They'll still have do this, though, for a trade pact to ›e completed, Sununu says. The President promised Export-Import Bank credits, but those are for American goods sold in the Soviet Union. "That's a net plus for he American economy," he says.

In truth, Bush made at least two other important concessions. By setting a June deadline for new limits ›n strategic nuclear weapons, Bush put pressure on his negotiators, not Gorbachev's. This allows the Soviets to stall in anticipation of further American concessions, vhich is what happened repeatedly in the INF talks. 'You want to put pressure on the other guy," says Paul Nitze, Reagan's chief arms negotiator. Bush also said ne's willing to ban production of chemical weapons altogether. The trouble is, stockpiles of chemical weap-›ns deteriorate. Production is needed to make sure chemical weapons are effective and a real deterrent.

Bush's biggest mistake was telegraphing his acceptance of Gorbachev's alibi that the Sandinistas and Cubans have assured him that they aren't arming rebels in El Salvador. Three days before the summit, Baker declared that either the Soviets are lying, or the Cubans and Nicaraguans are. He said he believes the Soviets. At Malta, Bush held forth for 15 minutes in his opening statement to Gorbachev about Central America. But he didn't insist that Gorbachev crack down on his clients. His aides handed a paper to Soviet officials that spelled out how Gorbachev could save $15 billion a year by cutting off Cuba, Nicaragua, Ethiopia, Cambodia, and Afghanistan. If Gorbachev was impressed by this, he didn't let on. •

The Party scene in Budapest.

HUNGARY HEARTS

By Tamas Aczel

BUDAPEST

"How is it," a friend asked, with a wink of gleeful sarcasm, "that whenever you happen to be in town, the Party dissolves itself and turns into another one?" In the mild October sunshine, we were sitting on the terrace of a famous *pâtisserie* in the middle of Belváros, the Inner City, now only a shadow of its old elegant hauteur, yet bearing its historical catastrophes and private misfortunes with dignity. It was true. I had not "happened to be in town" (my native city) for 33 years. The last time I'd seen those streets and houses around us, the ruling Communist Party had dissolved itself and become a new "socialist" Party, founded by Prime Minister Imre Nagy and some of his reform-minded friends. They were joined by János Kádár, who within a couple of days walked over to the advancing Russians and offered himself as their satrap in Hungary for as long as they wanted him. They wanted him for 33 years. When I left the country in November 1956, it was at a historical turning point. Now I came back, for the first time, at another one. Clio had been good to me, I told my friend, jokingly. He seemed to agree.

Later that week, as I watched the nationally televised Congress of the Old Party turning itself again into a New Party—the agonies of death and rebirth under the indifferent glare of arc lamps—I realized how serious my joke must have sounded. On the podium, before an astonished nation, speaker after speaker denounced the mistakes and horrors of the past and rhapsodized about the miracles of democracy. It was a time of confessing guilt, accepting responsibility, pledging purification. In an explosion of remorse, the leaders of the past were asking the people of the future for the remission of their sins. It was a spectacular performance, something historically unique, unparalleled—even during the past few tumultuous weeks in East-Central Europe. One by one, with gritted teeth, the Communists of Poland, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia had given up Party rule. But they were careful to preserve the Party itself; they kept its organizational network intact, its financial sources hidden, its gunpowder dry, even if they were forced, as in Poland and East Germany, to dismantle their private armies, the militias. In Hungary the Communist Party collapsed under the weight of popular pressure, and all that remained was a grumbling group of apparatchiki threatening to establish a Communist Party. They were welcome to do so, according to the

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press, though it didn't appear to be a promising venture.

When my plane banked and glided smoothly out of the soft gray cumuli, suddenly I saw the old familiar postcard-panorama of the city: the Danube, the bridges, the Gothic turrets of the Parliament, the walls of the Citadel, the graceful contours of the Royal Palace. I knew that beneath the old landscape I was going to find an array of new landscapes, new panoramas. But first I couldn't resist immersing myself in the warm waves of onrushing nostalgia. Having been an Orwellian "un-person" for so many years, I found it natural simply to venture into the city and seek out the places where I was born and grew up. The river was the same, lazy and gray; the Royal Palace had been rebuilt; my old alma mater was sootier, the house where I was born more desolate, but the Sunday morning High Mass in one of the most beautiful baroque churches of the city was elevating and moving, as if the old medieval hymn to the Virgin—"Do not forget us, poor, poor Magyars!"—had been suddenly endowed with a new meaning.

It didn't take long to realize that the country too was on a nostalgia binge, floating in an inflated memory-boat on the sweet seas of yesteryear. From the TV and the radio, from taverns and music halls, the sentimental melodies of my childhood and youth assailed me relentlessly. The audience loved it. If for me it was slightly intrusive and insistent, for those who had endured the sharp-edged ideological puritanism of the past four decades it was an opportunity of forgetting and remembering simultaneously.

There was, of course, a much more important form of remembering, though not forgetting. Wherever I went in the city I saw—on street corners, in the underground passages of the Metro, on public squares—book vendors setting up their primitive bazaars for selling the memories of the past 40 years in astonishing numbers. Anthologies reprinting the speeches or writings of the executed Imre Nagy and his friends and associates, memoirs (even of former Party functionaries), analyses of the Stalinist and post-Stalinist eras, sold by the hundreds of thousands. One anthology was said to have sold 100,000 copies within a week. These books, hastily printed and brought to that insatiable market as soon as it was technically possible, filled the gap between the once-unmentionable past and the free present, and created a bridge to understanding the future. According to the latest statistics, I was told, by mid-October 400 independent publishers had been operating countrywide. The number is staggering, especially if one knows that this is a country about four times the size of Massachusetts, with 12 million inhabitants. Partly, of course, all this was clever business by clever businessmen who smelled profit in the sudden possibilities of freedom, an early manifestation of competitive capitalism. But mainly it was the reflection of a burst of desire to know, an insatiable hunger for what was once forbidden fruit but now became, as a kilo of apples, accessible on street corners. Reliable information on cheap paper at a reasonable price: no wonder the books sold like candy.

This was all part of the glorious euphoria that had swept over the country, at first gradually, but later with increasing rapidity, ever since the beginning of 1989. It had reached its peak on June 16, at the public burial of Nagy, his friends, and other victims of the terror that followed the suppression of the 1956 revolt. In the presence of hundreds of thousands, the symbolic significance of the burial became more than obvious; it became overwhelming, an emotional and historical milestone in the development of a new tradition: Hungarian democracy. Much to my surprise, at the opening of the radio's running commentary on the funeral, a famous actor had read a poem of mine, one I had published in a Paris-based Hungarian-language magazine 20 years ago. I knew I was now on my way back to being a "person" in my native land.

Literature, of course, had for 400 years played an immensely important part in Magyar society. About the time Sir Francis Drake set out to sail around the world, the great poet Bálint Balassi set out from Hungary to Krakow. Sir Francis was lured by the glitter of the unknown, its famed treasures and treasured fame; Balassi, perhaps, by some beauties in certain houses of ill-repute on Drodzka Street, or, conceivably, by the masterly Renaissance chapel of Bartolomeo Berecci. Behind Drake's flapping sails were a strong queen and a vigorous country; behind Balassi's tired steed, a lovelorn mistress and a Hungary about to be buried under the tidal wave of the Sultan's armies. "Farewell," Balassi opened his famous valedictory poem, "farewell my sweet homeland, good Hungary, shield of Christianity." But he couldn't stay away for long; he knew what his moral and soldierly commitments demanded of him. He returned to take up the sword, and died, five years later, shielding Christianity and his country on the walls of Esztergom.

Since his death, poets in Hungary saw their patriotic duty as a moral commitment to their nation, and the people looked upon them as their prophets and visionaries. In every major turning point in the country's history, poets and intellectuals were in the forefront of the battle. They were there, in impressive numbers and courage, in the years of oppression before and after 1956, and led the charge against the system to a triumphant end. When, one evening, around nine o'clock, I turned on the TV, I wasn't surprised to find one of the country's finest writers sitting in front of the camera, answering questions about the nation's problems from a lone interviewer. And instantly his transformation began. This famous author of many books and movie scripts, whether intentionally or not, was assuming the traditional mantle of the seer. He offered his vision of the nation's fate in a conversation, one on one, with history, but his rhetoric sounded hollow, his wisdom marred by banalities. I wondered if there was a channel in the West that would give 90 minutes of prime time

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for such a performance. It was, no doubt, a classic Magyar phenomenon, which on one hand reflected an enormous respect for the nation's intellectuals, but on the other showed the problems of a tradition that, under increasingly different circumstances, was turning into an empty shell.

I mentioned this to some of the leading young intellectuals, and they seemed to agree. It was clear to them that if a new road was to be carved from the rocky hillside of history (as one of them put it), the nation must face new images of itself. With the establishment of the rule of law over the rule of man, a reinterpretation of tradition was clearly on the agenda. Now that an effective political and economic democracy was emerging, the opposition was becoming an active and institutionalized power, and the conflict between the government and the opposition was a battleground of ideas and not a field for executions. The fires of 200 years of romantic populism were slowly turning into an ash heap.

Here, I felt, I was approaching the wellspring of the new Hungarian democracy. For with the euphoria of this year of triumph fading into the grayness of every day, the problems of politics and economics must now be dealt with on a practical level with practical solutions. And those problems were enormous and unique: nobody had ever attempted the transformation of state economies into the private, market-oriented economies of the West. Elections were fine, but soon the question would be *how* the ideas can be translated into practice. Who owns the state-owned factories? What is the mechanism of finance and commerce? What happens to collectivized agriculture? It was clear to me that for Hungary the days of passion were now over, and the days of reason were beginning.

After the fight for a unifying purpose reached its climax and triumphed in the Nagy funeral and the abdication from power of the Communist Party, one could already detect fragmentations within the new democratic parties and organizations. Other signs of conflict and contradictions were also becoming visible: the realization of democracy under ordinary circumstances. It is a very healthy development—no more emotional demonstrations against a hostile power, no more rhapsodies or flowery speeches, no more bitter lamentation over the cruelty of Magyar fate.

When the plane banked and rose, and the familiar postcard panorama suddenly disappeared under the soft, gray cumuli, I knew that I was leaving a country that, perhaps for the first time in its thousand-year history, held the promise of letting its people determine their own fate. Hard work based on hard ideas was now the order of the day. *For* a fledgling democracy.

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What'll all those toadies do now?

CZECH-OUT TIME

By Josef Škvorecký

Has there ever been a case in history of a political system collapsing overnight, not as an aftermath of a lost war or of a bloody revolution but from its own inner rottenness? The recent events in Eastern and Central Europe, culminating in the Prague finale, caught everybody by surprise, perhaps because there is no precedent for them. It all looks like an illustration of Lincoln's worn dictum that you can't fool all of the people all of the time. Worn it may be, but it fits nicely.

Except, perhaps, in some of its details. While most people last week were thinking happily of Vaclav Havel and the other protagonists of the amazing events in Prague, I couldn't force some malicious thoughts from my mind. I kept thinking, for instance, of all the teachers of the science of Marxism-Leninism in Czech universities and Czech high schools whose subject has been unanimously dropped from the curriculum by that comic team of unanimous yes-men called the National Assembly. What are these "scientists" going to do now?

I was in their shoes once. Philosophy was my subject, and philosophy was abolished after the Communist coup in 1948, a few months before my graduation. In my first teaching job, in a village school in Eastern Bohemia, I was asked to instruct the local urchins in botany. Even the dumbest child knew incomparably more than I did about flowers and plants, since I knew nothing. What saved me was Latin. I pretended that the Czech names for the growing things that were brought to class had slipped my mind, and that I could recall only the Latin names—which I promptly made up. I faked it with impunity, moreover, because Latin had been dropped from the high school curriculum long before philosophy.

Can a dead language save the instructors of a dead science today? The older among them have been through a similar experience before. In the early '50s all of Marxist-Leninist science was contained in one book, *The History of the All-Union Communist Party [of the Bolsheviks]*, which every student had to learn practically by heart. Overnight, however, Khrushchev invalidated this source. This little thaw was a cause of great joy for a friend of mine, a medical student who had just failed her mandatory exam in Holy Scripture, as Marxism-Leninism was known among the unbelievers. But her joy didn't last long. The dean's office notified her that the invalidation of the history of the Bolsheviks did not invalidate her F; she had to take the exam again. This

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time she got a D+; by then all of Marxism-Leninism was contained in the *Communist Manifesto*, which is a much shorter book, and can be crammed in one night, with the help of black coffee and a little speed.

Today the Holy Scripture missionaries of Czechoslovakia are in a jam. And so are certain poets, some of whom published much in the 1970s, the heyday of *poésie engagée*. Josef Jelen, for instance, is a Catholic priest who, after the ambush of 1968, renounced Christ in order to see himself in print. The *Dictionary of Czech Literature 1970-1981* describes him as an author who, in his pre-'68 books, "remains still a captive of [Catholic] ideology, and finds his inspiration in the work of Jakub Deml" (a pre-World War II Catholic writer and priest who didn't have to renounce Christ, since in those days that was not a prerequisite for publishing). "However," the *Dictionary* remarks in laudatory tones about Jelen after 1968, he "ideologically matured." And so he did. His works included: *I Know That Hand* (1971), in praise of the founding of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia; *The Snowstorm* (1973), in praise of the victory of communism in Czechoslovakia in 1948; *The May Ballad* (1975), in praise of the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Red Army; *The Mural* (1977), in praise of the 60th anniversary of the October Revolution; *To My Homeland* (1978), in praise of the brotherly help of 1968; *The City and the River* (1978), in praise of Lenin's city Leningrad. And so on. What Josef Jelen praised in the '80s I don't know. The *Dictionary* doesn't cover that period.

And another problem: What new occupation can be found for the tens of thousands of "cadres officers" (*kádrový pracovník*)? Every company employing more than a certain number of workers had at least one cadres officer. They were dependable Communists by profession, entrusted with snooping on employees. Most enjoyed a network of informers, who wished to curry favor with them. Mainly they collected political jokes, to use against the tellers when the opportunity arose—when the teller wanted a promotion, or when the teller's child applied for admission to a school.

The cadres officers and their networks were incredibly efficient. I remember going to see the one in charge of the State Ensemble of Songs and Dances, where my wife precariously held a singing job. The Ensemble's raison d'être was travel to the West to make hard currency for the state. For ideological reasons, it occasionally performed also in the lands of soft currencies, and that was where my wife could go with them. She was barred from journeys to the West: her father had defected to the United States and her brother had served a 15-year term in a concentration camp. But naturally she yearned to buy the pretty things at Harrod's and Printemps, and wasn't interested in the GUM department store in Moscow, where the only items sure to be available were the Collected Works of whoever happened to be the Party secretary at the time. I was advised to explain to the cadres officer that my wife—in spite of her criminal father, now sweeping the halls of an apartment house on Central Park South, and in spite of her criminal brother, now mining uranium for the Peace Bomb—was of sound proletarian stuff and no security risk in the shops of Paris or London.

Off I went and for about 40 minutes worked hard to convince a gloomy man of my wife's political purity by acquainting him with her colorful life story. Born in a seedy hotel, since the family had just been evicted from their one-room apartment for owing too much rent. Sent to the Masaryk Homes for the Children of the Desperately Poor at the age of six, because she had a bad case of malnutrition and was too weak to attend a regular school. Father unemployed throughout the years of the Great Depression. Family supported by a mother who sewed aprons at home at 50 hellers (about ten cents) per apron. Father arrested by the Gestapo, Mother . . . Etc.

It was all true. I was sounding like a Dickens well-versed in Marx. But the gloomy cadres officer interrupted my monologue, and said: "Yes, that's all very nice, but how will you explain to me that"—he reached into a thick file, produced a paper, and read—"on April 6, 1951, in the butcher shop on Málková Street No. 18, your wife's mother told a reactionary political joke which portrayed comrade President as an ass?" My knowledge of Marx was not profound enough to refute such an argument. When the Ensemble next time traveled to Paris, my wife, as always, stayed home.

Now there will be freedom of speech in Czechoslovakia. The telling of jokes will be decriminalized. Reactionary opinions may be considered reprehensible, but they will no longer be punishable by not admitting a child to a school. The cadres officers, then, will have nothing to do; and since *perestroika* calls for economic efficiency, companies will hardly be able to employ people whose only skill is joke-collecting. Anyway, there won't be much work. Jokes proliferate in unfreedom. In freedom, they become scarcer.

Unemployment of a specialized kind looms over Czechoslovakia. Consider also the army. When things got under way in Prague, the generals reportedly plotted a coup against Havel, as they had plotted a coup against Dubček. We may conclude that the danger of a coup was real, since Havel's Civic Forum specifically challenged the army commanders not to intervene in the radical but peaceful developments in the country. I wonder if it was this challenge, or another consideration, that changed the generals' minds.

For if the generals had sent their troops against the demonstrators, it would have been the first time since 1620 that an independent Czech army fought a war on home territory. In 1620 the Protestant soldiers of the Kingdom of Bohemia lost the battle on the White Mountain near Prague, which marked the end of Bohemia as a sovereign state for the next 300 years. During those three centuries, Czech soldiers fought only in the ranks of the Austrian imperial army. In 1918 Czechoslovakia regained its sovereignty, but its armies were not given the order to fight after Munich in 1938, and no orders were issued when the Warsaw Pact invaders

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entered the country on the night of August 21, 1968.

Perhaps it was not so much Havel's message to the generals, but their realization that this would be a strange debut for their units, that stayed their hands. Still, the bemedaled commanding general of the Czechoslovak armed forces will have a place in history anyway. When asked by an American TV reporter about the rumors of an army coup, he snapped, "*Di do prdele!*" or "Up yours!" (The English voice-over translated it prudishly as "Go to hell!") Our general thus joined the ranks of other great military men who, pressed by circumstances, responded with "Merde!" and "Nuts!" Those words, however, were addressed to armed enemies, not to a nice American boy with a mike. Their armies were besieged by guns and tanks, not by flower-wielding students and old ladies.

Somehow I don't feel sorry for all these victims of the Prague Autumn of 1989. But then I have always been called a cynic.

JOSEF ŠKVORECKÝ is the author of *The Engineer of Human Souls* (Knopf) and *The Bass Saxophone* (Knopf).

The return of *Lidove Noviny*.

PAPER BACK

By Sanford J. Ungar

"This is a terrible psychological shock for all of us," said Rita Klimova when I reached her by phone in Prague a few nights ago. "We don't know how to adjust." Klimova—the daughter of a famous Czech Communist editor who fell into disgrace after the 1968 Soviet invasion, the ex-wife of a close adviser to Alexander Dubček who has long since gone into exile in Vienna, and herself a professor of political economy banished from the faculty of Charles University—has lived a dissident's life for two decades. Fluent in English, she worked quietly as a translator and interpreter until she reached retirement age and qualified for a state pension. Then she had more time for some pet projects, including an underground journal she helped launch two years ago.

That journal, *Lidove Noviny* (People's Newspaper), suddenly became legal at the end of November, as the embattled Communist government caved in to many of the demands of Civic Forum, the hastily formed opposition movement that wants to transform Czechoslovakia into a liberal democracy. *Lidove Noviny* is among the few publications that have any credibility as an alternative to the disgraced *Rude Pravo*, the official Communist Party daily. But the transition will not be easy. As the person in charge of Civic Forum's press center for foreign journalists, Klimova has been inundated in recent weeks, but it is the sudden success and uncertain future of *Lidove Noviny* that preoccupies her. Under circumstances that are not exactly conducive to clear, careful thought, she says, "we have to decide what we are going to be."

It was there one Thursday evening during the spring of 1988 when a group of six dissidents gathered in Klimova's small apartment in an old bourgeois neighborhood of Prague. Ranging in age from 22 to 63, they constituted most of the paper's editorial board. Klimova put out a modest dinner, including a single small tomato. "It was expensive, but it looked so good, I couldn't resist it," she explained. There were bottles of mineral water, wine, beer, and *becherovka*, the bitter herbal liqueur that is known as "the 13th spring of Carlsbad" and is used to celebrate special occasions.

The name *Lidove Noviny* is important in Czechoslovakia's turbulent history. Founded in 1891 to advance the interests of a liberal political party, it soon became a newspaper of the intelligentsia (like *Le Monde* in a later era in France), advocating Tomas Masaryk's dream of carving an independent country out of the Czech lands (Bohemia and Moravia) and Slovakia as the Austro-Hungarian empire crumbled. Once that dream was realized, the paper enjoyed its heyday, explained Jiri Ruml, the senior member of the group, who was serving as editor in chief and a publisher of sorts. "Between the wars," he said, "it was considered to be very objective, very high-brow, and stylistically very good." Although some members of the staff died in concentration camps during World War II, others collaborated with the Nazis and continued publishing the paper; as a result, it was folded after the war. "But in 1949," said Ruml, a once well-known journalist who went through his own Stalinist phase, "the Communist Party leadership decided that if they were to work more closely with the intellectuals, especially the skeptics, it would be a good idea to resume publication of *Lidove Noviny*. They named an editor from the regime. By 1952, however, it no longer seemed necessary to persuade anyone to work with the Party. They shut down the paper altogether. So the last real issue of *Lidove Noviny* was published more than 35 years ago."

There was an attempt to revive the paper in 1968, after a number of writers previously expelled from the Party were reinstated and censorship was temporarily abolished. According to Ruml, who was involved in that effort, they had bought a press and were supposed to begin publishing as an evening paper on September 1. But the tanks came in August, and *Lidove Noviny* was banned before it ever reappeared. Ruml was expelled from the Party and forced to make his living as a maintenance man and a crane operator until he too became eligible to retire with a pension a few years ago.

Ruml and his friends didn't try again until the fall of 1987. They believed that after ten years Charter 77 had become like a closed society. A document was issued,

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said Ruml, that called on people to "wake the nation up into freedom." "We thought this would be something that ordinary people would not be afraid of. Also, we chose a time that was difficult for the authorities: there was a change in the leadership in Czechoslovakia and great uncertainty about how things would develop in the Soviet Union." They started as a monthly, planning to become a weekly within two years if the political climate permitted. "Our aim, at every stage, is to provide information about things the official media ignore or lie about."

The project soon ran into problems. Without a sponsor that was a member of the National Front, which was supposed to unite all official organizations (even groups of dog breeders or stamp collectors) in their affirmation of the leading role of the Communist Party, the paper could not be legally registered and sold. If it was sold unofficially, the staff risked being charged with conducting an "unpermitted enterprise," the same accusation that destroyed the Jazz Section of the Musicians' Union.

When the first two pilot issues of *Lidove Noviny* were published, in November and December 1987, on both occasions Ruml was arrested and all of the copies were confiscated. Or so the police thought. In fact, only a small percentage of the copies had actually been seized. Anticipating just such problems, the staff had compartmentalized itself. Ruml was protected from knowing how and where the paper was produced. The people in charge of production had no idea who was writing for each issue or what they planned to say. This made internal communication difficult, but helped outsmart the authorities. "We never use the telephone to talk about what we are doing, and we always check to see if the police are following us," noted one member of the group. "We have to assume that everything we are saying here tonight is being heard."

Still, the new *Lidove Noviny* went from being produced on manual typewriters with carbon paper to sophisticated graphics and political cartoons; photocopies began turning up in government offices and on the Prague Metro. By last month (issue No. 21), *Lidove Noviny* looked like a thick, stapled newsletter, with 28 pages of biting, sometimes satirical commentary on domestic and international politics, economics, culture, and ecology.

It has done its best to irritate the government. For example, in the spring of 1988, when the official Party newspaper in Slovakia began, but then suspended, publication of excerpts from the autobiography of Vasil Bilak, the detested hard-liner then in charge of ideology on the Party's Central Committee, *Lidove Noviny* obtained Bilak's manuscript and published the missing parts. Before long, the editorial board estimated, as many as 4,000 copies of each issue were circulating across the country. "But let's face it," said one of the younger members of the board, "the police can, at any moment, wipe this thing out if they want to. We are functioning with a knife at our throats."

Meanwhile, the board operated as best its members could remember or imagine an editorial board should. It debated domestic economic issues and searched for the correct position toward the Palestinian uprising in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. The arguments, refreshing in a country where political opinions had been handed down from on high for 40 years, often became so heated that some members of the board threatened to resign if they did not prevail on certain issues.

On the evening I was there, the discussion turned quickly to American politics and the Moscow summit meeting then about to occur between Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev. "When Gorbachev came here [in April 1987], we actually thought he might apologize [for 1968]," complained Jan Dobrovsky, a 28-year-old who had studied agricultural engineering at Charles University but had been expelled because of his father's political views. "Instead he patted Husak on the back. People were terribly disillusioned."

That remark shattered the decorum and launched these seemingly reasonable intellectual companions on a startling (and, given the fear that the room was bugged, reckless) torrent of anti-Gorbachev, anti-Soviet, anti-Communist remarks: "Gorbachev's popularity in the United States frightens us. Can't you see that he's just bluffing? *Perestroika*, however interesting it may be, is just another way to strengthen the dictatorship." "Khrushchev talked a good line, too, but he went into Hungary in 1956, and look how many thousands the Russians killed there." "I am increasingly sympathetic to Reagan in recent months; at least he's not eating out of Gorbachev's hand. On balance, I think that if I were American, I would vote for the Republicans this year." "I like Margaret Thatcher, too. She knows how to talk to the Communists."

And so it went, until there was a sudden knock at the door. A look of panic crossed the face of everyone in the room, especially the 22-year-old, who pulled his papers together and reached to close his briefcase. As an uneasy quiet descended upon the group, Klimova went to the door. But it was not the police. It was Jiri Dienstbier, one of the journalistic heroes of 1968 who kept Radio Prague on the air and used it to report the truth about what was happening during the Soviet invasion. For years he had been required to work as a stoker, when he was not in prison, and he had become one of the most mischievously outspoken members of the dissident community. He had his own project at the time, launching an alternative international journal of foreign affairs, but he was also lending his moral support to the revival of *Lidove Noviny*. Dienstbier, a large, jolly man who always seems to have a bit of his last meal caught in his mustache, argued that *Lidove Noviny* should not attempt to remain absolutely pure by refusing all cooperation with the government. He then left as unpredictably as he had arrived.

That was a year and a half—and a political age—ago. Even as Poland and Hungary bubbled with change, the regime in Prague had successfully kept

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glasnost and *perestroika* from penetrating its borders and, of all things, seemed to rely on Soviet troops to keep the lid on. *Lidove Noviny* continued to appear, but its impact was severely limited. If nothing else, it helped the isolated, lonely intelligentsia believe that they were doing something useful. Earlier this year Ruml was imprisoned. Dienstbier, who had become chairman of the editorial board, stepped in as editor in chief; the government then disconnected his phone.

Overnight *Lidove Noviny* has come to assume tremendous importance. "For technical and other reasons, we cannot become a daily," says Klimova. "Not yet. For one thing, we have no press that could handle it. The Norwegians have offered us one, but it's 20 years old and weighs 320 tons, and we have to figure out how to get it here. And *Lidove Noviny* definitely must not become the official organ of the opposition. It must remain independent, even though it has the same objectives as Civic Forum."

At a recent meeting, the board decided to begin publishing twice a week in January, with only four pages at the start, but 150,000 copies each time. It hopes to go daily in 1991. Dienstbier, still officially a stoker, will be chairman of the editorial board again; Ruml, now out of prison, finds people examining his ardent Communist past, but he will return as editor in chief. The paper has been registered, and the staff is negotiating with the government for prime office space on Wenceslas Square.

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Czechoslovakia's instant mass movement.

TEN-DAY WONDER

By Thomas Omestad

PRAGUE

The enormous mass movement that has essentially overthrown Czechoslovak communism rose up with amazing speed. By the last week in November millions of people had participated in demonstrations across the country. Yet as recently as October 28—Czechoslovakia's independence day—dissidents could bring only 10,000 people into the streets. These brave souls had scarcely unfurled their pro-democracy banners before truncheon-wielding police were chasing them through Prague's winding Gothic lanes. Three weeks later throngs of hundreds of thousands of people were routine in Wenceslas Square. In a matter of days they brought down the Communist leadership and dispatched the Party toward permanent oblivion.

The long-suffering dissident community deserves much of the credit for the dramatic turnaround. But news reports have largely overlooked the role played by the students. Hundreds of students from Charles University and other Prague colleges were clubbed by police at a November 17 march marking the 50th anniversary of the Nazi murder of Czech student demonstrators in 1939. The regime's decision to knock heads was a monumental blunder. Milos Jakes, the Communist Party boss, hoped it would frighten the students back into apathy. But the dramatic liberalizations in the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, and especially East Germany had primed the Czechoslovak public for rapid change, as had hints of intensifying Soviet pressure on the hard-line Czechoslovak regime to reform. The zeal with which security forces bloodied unarmed students shocked Czechoslovaks more than any other event since Soviet tanks rolled over the Prague Spring reforms 21 years ago. It shattered the passivity that had long frustrated dissident organizers. "This is the start of the finish of this government," one man shouted prophetically during the violence.

The awful parallel between the regime's violence against student demonstrators and that of the Nazis exactly 50 years earlier created an immensely powerful emotional rallying point. The next day young Praguers were mobilizing for a student strike, calling for mass protests and a nationwide work stoppage, and fanning out across the capital with handbills. It was the students who finally cast off the legacy of timidity and fear left by the Prague Spring, and who bridged the considerable gap dividing oppositionists from the public.

The snap founding of Civic Forum, the new umbrella opposition group, just two days after the police beatings signaled clearly that members of the disparate activist community had at last pulled together. They had emerged from a period of soul-searching over strategy with a will to seize the moment and an unsuspected

THOMAS OMESTAD, associate editor of *Foreign Policy*, met with opposition and government figures in Prague during the November protests.

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mastery of coalition politics. "Now it isn't a small, foolish group of so-called dissidents," said Civic Forum's leader, Vaclav Havel. "We are at the time of a real beginning of a real opposition movement in this country."

From then on Civic Forum rode a tidal wave of popular discontent. In little more than a week, the democracy movement was transformed from a motley band of dissidents into an organized opposition—and more. "We're no longer the opposition," Michael Horacek, a spokesman, proclaimed during the stunningly successful general strike on November 27. "They [the Communists] are the opposition." In a region where history, seemingly frozen for four decades, now moves with unnatural rapidity, the evolution of the Czechoslovak opposition movement has broken all records. In ten days it achieved what Poland's Solidarity took nine years to extract: a commitment by Communists accustomed to jailing their critics to abandon the Party's monopoly on power.

When the wave of protests hit on November 17, activists were mulling over their past and future. Their principal achievement, as veteran dissident Jiri Dienstbier said, had been preserving the moral will to resist: "We were passing a small candle through the darkness." The movement's major failing had been its inability to spark protest across Czechoslovak society. The massive demonstrations in East Germany seemed to cause only ripples in Czechoslovakia. As long as the "socialist certainties" of sausage and beer remained in ample supply, the conventional analysis held, the complacent Czechs and Slovaks would not join their East German neighbors in the streets. "In my opinion this society is completely destroyed," Ivan Lamper, an editor of a samizdat political magazine, lamented to me before the first mass rallies. "People want democracy but they don't want to pay for it." Dissidents bemoaned the lack of a central opposition organization and of an alternative political program. And they didn't seem to be closing the gap between the largely Prague-based intelligentsia, which guides the opposition, and the rest of Czechoslovakia's 15 million people. Many of Solidarity's leaders built their legitimacy as representatives through years of close contact with the masses. But the writers, artists, actors, and journalists of Czechoslovakia's opposition functioned mainly as a moral beacon for a demoralized society. As practical politicians, they were a bit inept.

Of course, marginalizing the opposition had been precisely the aim of the government's relentless campaign of harassment, jailings, and surveillance. It usually refused to acknowledge the opposition's existence. When it did, the dissidents were branded as creations of the Western media and human rights groups. Members of the Communist Party who had joined en masse to participate in the Prague Spring reforms had been purged en masse after the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion. They and other oppositionists who emerged later found themselves stoking coal, cleaning latrines, and the like. Their children encountered mysterious difficulties getting admitted to college. Their telephones and apartments were bugged. They lived under the constant threat of interrogation, searches, and jail. Police were assigned to them like case workers. Fear of such punishments limited the number of Czechoslovaks willing to join up with the intellectuals. Not surprisingly, the independent groups had to concentrate more on mere survival than on developing a political program.

Both the problems and the strengths of the opposition were exemplified by Havel, the country's best-known dissident. A slight, soft-spoken playwright of enormous personal courage, Havel spent five years in prison, where he nearly died of illness. His plays have been banned in Czechoslovakia. His prominence as an artist and his persistence against the state made him the symbol of dissent. Yet all along Havel was more a spokesman of conscience than a potential political leader. "I do not intend to take for myself the role of professional politician. I have never had that ambition," he said even as Civic Forum was formed. Some of Havel's fellow dissidents, though not questioning his pre-eminence in the movement, have pushed him to act more boldly. They criticized him sharply for advising the country's young people to avoid a pro-democracy rally in August after the government hinted that it could turn into another Tiananmen Square massacre. "Vaclav Havel is a man of good heart, a humanitarian," Petra Uhl, a prominent and often-jailed dissident, told the *Washington Post* two months later. "The problem is he does not support any concrete political program. He is an intellectual to such a high degree that I don't think he will be able to pursue one."

Through the mid-1980s the sole preserve of open opposition was Charter 77, the renowned human rights manifesto signed by Havel and hundreds of others. The candle was being kept aflame, but just barely. But in the last two years the arrival of a younger generation of students and workers began recharging the movement. Free of their elders' defeatism, they acted out of frustration with the authorities' refusal to accept Gorbachev-era freedoms. They rejected the unwritten social compact by which the Communists filled store shelves in exchange for sullen acceptance of the regime's stifling orthodoxy. The new generation coalesced in more than 30 new groups and began to link up with the older dissidents. A group called the Czech Children, made up of activists in their 20s, joined in demonstrations for political freedoms and environmental protection. The John Lennon Peace Club grew out of an informal group advocating independent cultural activity and respect for human rights. And the pranksterish Society for a Merrier Present, armed with truncheons made of cucumbers and salami, staged mock police assaults on demonstrators in Prague. Some of the merry policemen later ate their truncheons.

Independent activism spread in other directions. Widely circulated petitions called for the release of

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jailed dissidents and an open discussion of 1968. Demand grew for samizdat publications. Thousands of Slovaks flocked to Catholic pilgrimages with anti-Communist undertones. Former associates of Alexander Dubček, the ousted father of the Prague Spring's "socialism with a human face," formed Obroda, a self-described "club for socialist restructuring." Dubček himself emerged from his partly self-imposed isolation as a low-level forestry bureaucrat in Bratislava, calling for a Czechoslovak *perestroika* in interviews with foreign newspapers, on Leningrad TV, and on the Voice of America.

Finally, Havel became the publicly recognized leader of the opposition. Intent on making an example of him, the regime staged a harsh show trial in February for his role in pro-democracy demonstrations the previous month. Yet the Communists' vitriolic media campaign against him unwittingly heightened Havel's celebrity status. A covertly made tape recording of a secret speech by Jakes revealed that he felt Havel's jailing had been a tactical error; Jakes suggested instead that police target less prominent dissidents whose incarceration would draw little notice abroad.

From its inception, Civic Forum's role has been—to use Havel's favorite characterization—improvised. The Forum made a set of specific demands that those Communist leaders tied to the Warsaw Pact intervention step down, that an independent investigation of the November 17 police brutality be launched, and that political prisoners be freed. After the first mass protest, Forum representatives opened talks with the more reformist—and opportunistic—prime minister, Ladislav Adamec, securing from him a pledge against further police or army intervention. Havel initially declined to urge people into the streets; that call came from students. Yet one day later he was encouraging a vast crowd in Wenceslas Square to keep up the pressure on the government. Any lingering hesitation to act had been overwhelmed by the revolution from below. The Forum's "improvisation" was taking its cue from the action in the streets, not from the cooler deliberations of the Prague intellectuals.

Yet as the mass demonstrations continued, Civic Forum's organizational skills radically improved. It was increasingly able to channel, if not control, the public outpouring. From its makeshift headquarters in the basement of the Magic Lantern Theater, it organized the later protests and led the general strike. Just as significant, it was able to halt the mass rallies after the strike in order to conduct power-sharing talks in a calmer atmosphere. It won the grudging recognition of the new Communist Party chief, Karel Urbanek, who replaced Jakes on November 25, as a legitimate negotiating partner. And the once-reluctant Havel, who still longs to return to the theater, seemed to find his voice—and to accept his political role—in the week-long national catharsis at Wenceslas Square.

Havel and other opposition leaders originally conceived of Civic Forum as a Czechoslovak version of East Germany's largest opposition group, New Forum. It was to be neither a political party nor an alternative government. Just the same, Civic Forum quickly found itself pushed beyond negotiating the terms of a dialogue with the government to conducting one. Then the Forum abruptly decided to act as a political party, much like Solidarity did in Polish elections earlier this year. Forum leaders announced that they would endorse candidates to run against Communists next year, when Czechoslovakia holds its first free elections since the postwar Communist takeover. Even with the Civic Forum's shortcomings—above all its lack of workers' representatives—no other group was in a position to use the people's power in the streets to wrest concessions from the government. Civic Forum leaders now see their group as a watchdog over the transition to democracy.

The Czechoslovaks' disgust with communism is so pervasive that even the Party soon accepted the need for a transitional coalition government with non-Communists. It had become clear even to the Communists that their monopoly on power was now untenable. The goal of a coalition government, from the Forum's perspective, will be to secure fair, multiparty elections and constitutional guarantees of free speech, a free press, and freedom of association. After next year's elections the Forum may dissolve itself and let traditional political parties do their work.

Some of those parties are already coming into focus. The Socialist Party, long a toady in the Communist-run National Front, switched sides and backed Civic Forum; it could become an electoral force of its own. The Democratic Initiative, an opposition group founded in 1987, is stepping forward as a Western-style liberal party. Non-collectivized farmers are planning to launch a party. And Communist reformers have formed a group called the Democratic Forum, which could conceivably break away from the Communist Party. Other parties will undoubtedly crowd into the field in the coming weeks.

In the interim, the Forum will have to decide what its role will be. It must also develop a consensus program of starter reforms. (Wisely, opting out of the Warsaw Pact is emphatically not one of them.) And there is the immediate question of who will serve in a coalition government. Although the Forum was not insisting that its members be named to a coalition Cabinet, it was claiming a de facto veto power over those appointed. It promptly exercised that veto when Adamec, apparently restrained by remaining Communist Party conservatives, tried to weasel out of his promise to share power with non-Communists. On December 3 he announced a new Cabinet, in which only five of 21 posts were transferred to non-Communists and 13 of the ministers had served in the previous Cabinet. The opposition called another mass demonstration and threatened a second general strike unless the Cabinet was recast to reflect the Communists' loss of influence. Another improvisation. Havel and Civic Forum will undoubtedly be making many more of them through this exhilarating season of the Prague Fall. •

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The election will be fair—if there is one.

CIVICS, NICARAGUA-STYLE

By Hendrik Hertzberg

I'd been primed to expect a lot of things in Managua—revolutionary fervor, totalitarian sullenness, grotesque poverty, churchy North American "sandalistas"—and, sure enough, a bit of each was on view during the days I spent there. But no one had told me about the weird beauty of the place.

Managua was flattened by an earthquake in 1972 and never rebuilt. Somoza stole the relief money that poured in after the quake, and the Sandinistas had other priorities. So nature took its course. As a consequence, downtown Managua is more rural than urban. A few shells of old buildings remain, now weathered into mossy ruins in a haunting tableau softened by lush vegetation. The main square now commands a panoramic view of Lake Managua. A herd of oxen wanders in a nearby meadow. The walls of the old cathedral still soar, but the roof is long gone. Inside, you look up and stone angels blow their horns against the bright blue sky; you look down and the weeds that carpet the floor are waist-high. In this neighborhood there is very little motorized traffic. The smell of exhaust, which in many Third World cities is so strong you can taste it on your tongue, is entirely absent. Instead the air has a faint aroma of charcoal. At the Eastern Market, a mile away, crowds trudge through a muddy warren of ramshackle stalls offering faded plastic trinkets, loose cigarettes, expired pharmaceuticals. In an alley of food stands, dull-eyed children wave clouds of flies from chunks of fatty organ meat. Here the poverty is palpable. But the quiet, green center of town is a romantic ruin, more like ninth-century Rome than the modern focus of the waning cold war.

Along with my North American traveling companions—journalists from the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Nation*, the *Atlantic*, and *Vanity Fair*—I spent most of my time in Nicaragua's magic-realist capital talking with Sandinista spokesmen, their political opponents, and representatives of the United Nations and the Organization of American States, who are responsible for observing the February 25 general election. Voters are to choose not only a president and vice president but also a new National Assembly and hundreds of local officials. Despite everything—which is to say despite the sputtering *contra* war, despite the government's suspension of the cease-fire, despite the horrors in neighboring El Salvador, and despite the fabled hostility of anti-Yankee revolutionaries to bourgeois democratic institutions—the election will probably come off as scheduled. If it does, it will be the freest, fairest election ever held in Central America outside Costa Rica.

The reason is all those international observers. They are uniformly independent, well informed, and well organized, and to all appearances they are competent. The U.N. will have 150 observers running around the country during election week, the OAS will have 300, and free-lance non-governmental groups like the one organized by former President Carter—who was invited by both the Sandinistas and the opposition—will have a couple of hundred more. A sizable advance guard of this horde has been in place for three months, monitoring the registration process (which was unanimously pronounced fair) and the campaign itself.

Nicaragua has 4,394 polling places, and the observers obviously won't be able to watch the voting and counting at them all. Their plan, as Iqbal Riza, a suave Pakistani diplomat who heads the U.N. contingent, explained it to us, is to visit all or nearly all the rest after the polls close. At each polling place, the votes will be counted by the president of the local election *junta* in the presence of a poll-watcher from the Sandinista party and one from the United National Opposition (UNO), the 14-party alliance whose presidential candidate is Violeta Chamorro. The U.N. or OAS observer will make sure all three agree on the totals, and if they tally the assumption will be that the count was fair.

This system should be foolproof—assuming, of course, that UNO manages to get itself sufficiently organized to have poll-watchers at every polling place. "That's one of the points we've been stressing to the opposition," Riza said. "They have a major responsibility. They have to be there." After some early doubts, it now appears certain that UNO will be able to recruit (or hire) enough volunteers to ensure a fair count.

The international kibitzing is unprecedented in both scope and duration. "We have observed many elections, but we have never before observed a *process*," Mario Gonzalez, the Colombian chief of the OAS team, told us. "In Chile and elsewhere, our observers were in

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the country for a week at most. This time we will be around for more than six months. We've had 18 OAS observers here since August 4, living in all nine regions of the country. We'll be able to render judgments not only on the registration and the voting, but also on things like access to the media."

If the margin on election night is wider than a few percentage points, the election will be very hard to steal. But if it's very close, the Sandinistas will in theory be presented with a powerful temptation to jiggle the figures a bit and pre-emptively announce a victory. The antidote to this danger would be a "rapid count," an effort to sample the returns independently of the official national counting center and with comparable speed. A "rapid count" dissuaded the Chilean authorities from falsifying the results of last September's referendum on keeping Pinochet in power, and another exposed the crude fraud in Panama last May. Such an effort will likely be undertaken in Nicaragua. The Carter group is consulting with the OAS and the U.N. about mounting one.

And the election could well be close. The three high Sandinista officials we met with—Vice President Sergio Ramirez, Deputy Foreign Minister Victor Hugo Tinoco, and Foreign Ministry Secretary General Alejandro Bendaña—all predicted that President Daniel Ortega and Ramirez would win with at least 60 percent of the vote. The Sandinistas are well organized and well disciplined, and in a country where the police, the army, and the education system are run as branches of the ruling party, incumbency offers more than the usual advantages. Opinion surveys, however, show a dead heat. The most reliable one, taken a month ago by the Washington political consultant Sergio Bendixen for Univision, the U.S.-based Hispanic TV network, shows 40 percent for Ortega, 39 for Chamorro, five percent for one of the seven other parties on the ballot, and 16 percent "undecided." (North American political obsessives will remember Bendixen as a strategist for Alan Cranston in 1984 and Bruce Babbitt in 1988.)

No one thinks all the "undecideds" are really undecided. Bendaña insists that "people don't like to be asked. They've been told that their vote is secret, and they're not going to tell any pollster." But if he's wrong, and if some voters declining to reveal their preferences are motivated less by rugged Nicaraguan individualism than by fear that the authorities might somehow find out and be displeased, then the poll numbers are bad news for his side.

The campaign, which formally begins this week, will not be anything like as fair as the voting itself. The print press will not be a problem for UNO—Chamorro, after all, is the publisher of *La Prensa*, the largest of Nicaragua's three daily newspapers—but television will be. The parties get free time on the box, and the Supreme Electoral Council, Sandinista-controlled but remarkably well behaved, recently ordered that these broadcasts be moved from Channel 2, which yields a snowy picture in Managua and none at all in outlying areas, to Channel 6, which comes in clearly throughout most of the country. But UNO has to rotate its slots with the minor parties that stand no chance of winning, and the Sandinistas control the news broadcasts.

For UNO, however, this problem may not be a problem. As the recent experience of countries as various as India, Panama, and Poland demonstrates, oppositionists can win elections handily even if the government shuts them out of television entirely. In Nicaragua, everybody knows who's running. Everybody knows the race is between the Sandinistas and UNO. If the election becomes a referendum on the status quo, UNO will win easily, and the less people know about UNO (beyond the already well-known fact that it represents change) the better. The Sandinistas' own campaign slogan, "*Todo será mejor*" ("Everything will be better"), reflects in its choice of tense a nervous recognition that the country is a mess. But if the election gets cast as a choice between two prospective governments, the Sandinistas could do better. UNO is a taped-together coalition of parties and grouplets ranging from the Communist Party to former Somocistas, with democrats of varying stripes in between. This does not make for a "clear message." Chamorro launched her campaign by announcing that her martyred husband, Pedro Joaquín, who has been dead for ten years, had told her he endorses her candidacy, as had God—which in most countries would have been a fatal gaffe. This sort of thing goes down better in Nicaragua, where there's a good deal of primitive religiosity, but not much better. If there's a televised debate—still an outside possibility—Daniel is likely to come across as competent if humorless, Violeta as a nice lady way out of her depth.

The Sandinistas have national pride on their side. They have stood up to the colossus of the north. They whipped the *contras*. They carried out land reform, which even the opposition admits will be an enduring achievement of their rule. UNO, for its part, appeals simultaneously to high motives and low. The high motive is democracy. The low motive is money. The millions of dollars the U.S. Government is giving UNO is a campaign issue, but it doesn't cut against UNO alone—and not just because the Sandinistas have received large amounts of Soviet logistical aid. Asked why his side had decided to accept the money, Alfredo Cesar, an important UNO spokesman, told us, "If we don't take it, the Sandinistas will say we took it anyway"—which, when you think about it, is a pretty lame argument. The money from Washington is important not so much for what it will buy in the way of buttons and bumper stickers as for the message it sends about future largess from up north. If UNO can pry loose $9 million when it's still in opposition, many voters are bound to reason, think how the Yankee cash will flow if UNO wins!

The most interesting question will arise after the voting and the counting are done. If UNO wins, will

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the Sandinistas accept it?

The Sandinista officials I spoke with all said they would go peacefully if they lost. "If we lose we'll become an opposition party—but we're going to be a hell of a strong opposition party," Tinoco told me toward the end of a long evening of conversation. "To be perfectly honest, I wouldn't want to be the party in power and have to deal with an opposition party like the Sandinista Front. I wouldn't wish that on anybody."

The next morning, over breakfast at the incongruously Swedish Modern convention complex called the Olof Palme Center, I asked Vice President Ramirez how he could square the possibility of electoral defeat with such tenets of Marxism-Leninism as "democratic centralism" and the leading role of the party.

"The truth is we've never described ourselves as a Marxist-Leninist party," he replied. "Yes, some of our perspectives reflect Marxist insights. But the great difference between us and traditional orthodoxy is that we've never talked about a single party without opposition or a command economy without private property. We are not carrying out measures to let people enter or leave the country freely, because they already can. We are not deleting 'Socialist Republic of Nicaragua' from our constitution because we never put it in. We are not changing from a single-party system because we never had one. If somebody has something to learn here, it's not us. It's those countries in Eastern Europe."

All very stirring. Yet there is reason for doubt. In Eastern Europe, Communist regimes now abdicate power on an almost daily basis, but the Communists of Eastern Europe are quislings in a state of moral collapse. The Sandinistas are genuine revolutionaries who won power on their own, and who brought with them a vision of the revolutionary state as an instrument of utopian transformation. That vision ill comports with the humdrum notion of parties alternating in power through regular elections until the end of time, especially when the other party represents the class enemy. And when the Sandinistas boast about the cleanliness of the current electoral process, they tend to do so in a way that suggests they regard the election as a concession they have made to the United States and to the internal opposition. In a real democracy, of course, elections are not concessions. They are the basis of legitimacy.

In the wake of the carnage in El Salvador, Nicaragua's political atmosphere has darkened. The Central American "peace process" is in deep trouble. As the crash of the plane carrying surface-to-air missiles establishes, the Sandinistas have been supplying arms to the Salvadoran rebels in violation of Ortega's explicit promises to the other Central American presidents not to do so. The Sandinistas, it would seem, are perfectly capable of playing for keeps. If they become convinced they are going to lose the election, it is far from unimaginable that they could find a pretext to cancel it. Washington has helpfully provided one such pretext by keeping the *contras*, who by regional agreement were supposed to have been demobilized by now, in business.

And then there is the awkward matter of the military. Even if the election takes place and the Sandinistas lose, they will retain, at the very least, significant influence in the army. UNO recognizes this and is prepared to live with it. One possibility, especially if the UNO victory is narrow, is a "national unity" government in which the Sandinistas hold on to the Defense Ministry. Another possibility, familiar in this part of the world, is a civilian government headed by one party in which the army is under the de facto control of a different political tendency, one with a less than perfect record of respect for democracy. Nicaragua could become a sort of El Salvador in reverse—minus (and this is a big minus) "death squad activity."

And what if the Sandinistas win? Will the United States accept it? So far there is no sign Washington has made up its mind. Governments, like individuals, prefer to avoid thinking about an outcome they dread.

When the economist Richard Parker, who organized our trip to Nicaragua, asked UNO's Alfredo Cesar if UNO favors lifting the U.S. trade embargo if the Sandinistas win a fair election, he replied emphatically, "Yes. Yes. Without any doubt." The Bush Administration has not yet given a clear answer to that question. One thing, though, is clear: the U.S. policy of thwarting *contra* demobilization makes it considerably likelier that the question will have to be faced.

President Bush ought to ponder some figures from the Bendixen-Univision poll. Nicaraguans, the poll shows, view the *contras* unfavorably by an overwhelming 65 percent to 20 percent margin. Only 29 percent think they're "freedom fighters," while 44 percent see them as "tools of imperialism." Asked whose pressure made the election possible, 53 percent say it was the Central American presidents, while only 14 percent say it was the *contras*. Fifty-nine percent say the United States is Nicaragua's enemy, considerably more than any other country. On the other hand, 55 percent blame the Sandinistas fully or partly for Nicaragua's economic crisis, and a full 61 percent say life was better under Somoza than it is now. Only 24 percent think times are better under the Sandinistas. Obviously, if Bush is serious about helping UNO the best thing he could do would be to eliminate the *contras* as an issue and allow Nicaraguans to focus their full attention on the dismal state of the economy.

I left Managua with rather more respect for the intelligence and suppleness of the Sandinistas than I had brought with me. Even so, as a North American I hope for a UNO victory. Nicaragua was never a threat to our security, but for ten years it has been a threat to our sanity. If UNO squeaks by, perhaps the United States' Nicaragua neurosis will at last be cured.

It will take a lot more than a new government, however, to cure what ails Nicaragua. Decades of dictatorship and another of war and revolutionary rapture have left the country with a devastated economy and a wounded political culture. No matter who wins, the weeds will grow waist-high for a long time to come. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Early Winter Roundup

Triumph of the Spirit (Nova International). Robert M. Young is an earnest director whose films are more distinguished for social concerns than for art. (*Short Eyes*, about a child molester; *Extremities*, about attempted rape and attempted revenge.) The news that he was making a film about Auschwitz-Birkenau and was actually shooting it in Auschwitz-Birkenau brought good and bad auguries. Young would be genuinely dedicated to the subject; and he would think that the location in itself gave the picture merit.

The result is a bit better than I'd expected. *Triumph of the Spirit*, a title that's an obvious response to Riefenstahl's Nazi paean *Triumph of the Will*, does not pass the test that all films about the Holocaust must now answer: Is it necessary after *Shoah*? The dialogue by Andrzej Krakowski and Laurence Heath is mechanical (including the line "Why are you telling me all this?"), and the women in it are inadequate. But there's no offensive cunning in the film. Young has done his earnest best. Excepting only Cliff Eidelson's score, which yowls along like pseudo-Penderecki, the picture never seems exploitative.

But it never seems enlightening, either. It's based on the account of a Greek-Jewish boxer, Salamo Arouch, who with his parents and family and girlfriend was deported by the occupying Germans from Salonika to Auschwitz. The narrative goes through harassment, torture, killing of inmates, and—the one novelty in Arouch's case—the order to box. The commandant is a boxing fan and makes Arouch fight opponents of his choice. Arouch knows that his life literally depends on winning, so he wins. (How he gets the strength and energy on short rations is not explained.) He survives. Outside of the boxing, everything is gruelingly familiar.

Arouch is acted as well as the part allows by Willem Dafoe, who showed in *Platoon* and *The Last Temptation of Christ* that his prime interest as actor is in honesty. Two more pleasant reports. Robert Loggia, an actor chiefly noted for his serviceability in commercial TV and movies, is truly affecting as Arouch's father. Edward James Olmos, the Hispanic American who was solid as the math teacher in *Stand and Deliver*, is solid again as a hard-bitten gypsy kapo.

However, my thoughts often wandered from the story being told by the principals, the professionals, to the dozens of Polish non-professionals who had been recruited locally to play prisoners and guards. What could have been in their minds as, clad in various uniforms, they moved through the yards and barracks of that still-reeking hell?

Back to the Future, Part II (Universal). There's an American business legend about a man who doubled the sales of a shampoo with one word. The label on the shampoo bottle read: "Apply to hair, massage vigorously, and rinse." This genius added the word: "Repeat."

Part II is the (first) repeat of *Back to the Future*. It's located somewhere between *Part I* and *Part III*, which is promised for next summer—and which is previewed at the end of *II*. This process, much like the house that Jack built, is building jack. In its first weekend of release, over Thanksgiving, *II* was expected to take in between $37 million and $45 million. Reportedly people waited in line all night outside some theaters before its opening day. Reports of that kind are always cheering: they are further assurance that everything in this country, social and economic and cultural, is so blissfully perfect that the next installment of *Back to the Future* is all that need preoccupy thousands.

The picture itself? Well, this time Michael J. Fox is taken forward by Christopher Lloyd, into 2015, where the situation for himself and offspring is not so great. Then Lloyd takes him back to 1985 so that he can alter events and make 2015 come out better. Lloyd is not quite so funny this time as the bumbling, busy Mad Scientist. Fox is more at ease here than he was in *Casualties of War*, but his visit to the future and a shot of him as himself older made me realize that his career depends more than most on his youth. He is the nearest thing we have today to a child star. The child star's career usually ended with puberty; Fox's may not survive his (persona's) virginity.

The Little Mermaid (Buena Vista). This ani-

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Henry V. *Who could have imagined that anyone would challenge Laurence Olivier by adapting, directing, and starring in another version of the Shakespeare play? Who could have imagined that Kenneth Branagh would bring it off? He does, more rather than less, and with glory. (Reviewed 12/4/89)* **My Left Foot.** *If you let yourself be put off because this is about a man with cerebral palsy, you will cheat yourself of much excellent acting and engrossing, non-slushy drama. Based on Christy Brown's autobiography. (11/27/89)* **Mystery Train.** *More spare stylistic elegance from Jim Jarmusch and even less story than in his first two pictures. His treatment of interweaving lives in a seedy Memphis hotel is astringent in its view of American pop culture—and of film itself. (12/11/89)* **sex, lies, and videotape.** *Steven Soderbergh's first film—about the sexual ambience in which four young people live—is extraordinary. (9/4/89)* **—SK**

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mated feature from Disney is for children. In more than one way. Those old enough to remember *Pinocchio* and *Snow White* are not likely to get as much fun out of *The Little Mermaid* as newcomers to Disney. Character after character, the older audience will see the attempt to replicate earlier Disney characters like the Wicked Stepmother and Jiminy Cricket and J. Worthington Foulfellow. But none of the new ones is equally successful. It was a great idea to have Buddy Hackett do the voice of a knockabout seagull named Scuttle, but the characterization, the drawing, and the dialogue don't have the sharpness of, say, Jiminy.

The story, happied up from Hans Christian Andersen, is built in regularly contrasting blocks of comedy, suspense, romance, and so on. The songs, written by Howard Ashman and Alan Menken who wrote the score of *Little Shop of Horrors*, have the same varsity-show aroma as the songs for the earlier show—small-town cleverness. As for the animation itself, the colors are more lush than they used to be, but otherwise it's undistinguished.

Still, the children in the audience seemed to enjoy it, and parents need not worry about the obligatory patches of violence. Years ago the parents of a six-year-old girl allowed me to take her to her very first "theater" film, as opposed to TV. It was an animated feature with a wicked witch. When the witch hurled threats and thunder and lightning, my guest shivered and covered her eyes with her hands. I looked more closely. She had spread her fingers so that she could peer through and not miss the movie.

Dealers (Skouras). This is merely a progress—or regress—report on Rebecca De Mornay. She now appears as an American financial whiz working in a London investment bank, another script along the lines of Jane Fonda's *Rollover* and Melanie Griffith's *Working Girl*, in which a woman gets the chance to show her business prowess without scanting her sexual prowess.

The picture was directed by Colin Bucksey, an Englishman who has been busy in American TV, and the screenplay is by Andrew MacLear. There's nothing jarringly painful about their work, it's just jarringly imitative. The film is a waste of time for everyone, especially De Mornay. Actors need to work, of course, for more reasons than income—to keep visible, for instance. But the woman who did those outstanding performances in *Risky Business* and *Runaway Train*—even in *And God Created Woman*—needs better work than her recent *Feds* and this dross. •

REALIZING RAWLS

by Thomas W. Pogge

One of this century's most influential pieces of political philosophy, John Rawls's *Theory of Justice* (1971) has sparked debates that have had an enormous impact in a variety of fields. Thomas Pogge here presents both a spirited defense and a constructive critique of Rawls's work. He sets out to make Rawls's conception of justice more concrete and, in doing so, to retrieve its considerable progressive political potential. In addition, Pogge argues for extending the Rawlsian criterion of justice to the international arena, and identifies those features of the present global order that this criterion would single out as principal targets for institutional reform. **$12.95 paper, $36.95 cloth**

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Picasso and Braque at MOMA, stroke by stroke.

Married . . . with Cubism

BY SANFORD SCHWARTZ

The Cubist pictures that Picasso and Braque made in the years leading up to the First World War have long been described as the first genuinely modern art, the first art to present our fragmented, relativistic way of seeing and thinking. In his catalog essay for the Museum of Modern Art's "Picasso and Braque: Pioneering Cubism" exhibition, William Rubin, the show's director, makes an emphatic claim for their achievement. "Not since Rembrandt's," he writes, "has any painting so captured the elusive shading of human consciousness, the complex anatomy of thought, the paradoxical character of knowledge." Yet if MOMA's show is elusive or complex, it's because Picasso's and Braque's Cubist art is something of a tease. The pictures are brilliant conceptions, but the brilliance is about itself. The experience ought to be mysterious, but the pictures take us to a shallow realm where nothing is happening.

"Pioneering Cubism" represents the first time that Picasso's and Braque's work from roughly 1908 to 1914, one of the most famous collaborations in the history of art, has been brought together. It is a unique event, and there are, of course, many sumptuous and elegant, and many dextrous and witty, pictures and sculptures. The exhibition is especially interesting in the opening stages, when Picasso and Braque gradually merged their voices. We go through this show very slowly. Like Emily in *Our Town*, who gets to re-live a day in her childhood, we feel we've been given a rare chance to return to our beginnings, to see the birth of 20th-century space, and we're anxious for the experience to be magical. It's hard not to feel grateful to Cubism. Chagall, Dufy, Beckmann, Juan Gris, Mondrian, the Russian Suprematists, Klee, Marin, Hans Hofmann, Jackson Pollock, and on and on through artists of the last ten years—to one degree or another, all owe something to Picasso's and Braque's opening up of the space and the subject matter of a picture. But the Cubist pictures themselves now feel overfamiliar. Seen after MOMA's own 1980 Picasso retrospective, which presented the full, and incredible, range of his art, Cubism seems anticlimactic.

The sheer size of MOMA's exhibition also makes for slow going. There are nearly 400 paintings, collages, drawings, prints, objects, and sculptures on two floors of the museum. We feel we're seeing virtually everything that came out of Picasso's and Braque's studios in those years. (It's hard to imagine any art movement sustaining our interest when seen in such microscopic detail.) The show's point is that Cubism is more than another art style; it is to be understood as the essence of the epoch we are still in. We're supposed to find Picasso's and Braque's every move, as they inched along, a thing of great moment. This isn't said in the wall labels, but it is implied by the museum's presentation and its monumental catalog, which includes over 300 color plates and an enormous day-to-day account of the artists during the period. Rubin is saying, "This art is beyond being edited; we've got to have it all."

Cubism's historical and aesthetic importance is undebatable. Picasso and Braque didn't make the first abstract pictures; there's always a person, an object, or a floating array of dimly recognizable things inside a Cubist rearrangement. But Cubism may have been the first movement that made it clear that the person, the landscape, or the thing that the artist showed was a pretext, and that his true subject was the sheer fashioning of his picture. Cubism might be called the first art style that said that the artist makes his own reality. It's easy to see how truly abstract art, art that showed none of the recognizable world, came along in the years right after Cubism.

Seen in number, though, the actual pictures are so many exquisite objects. With their buttery surfaces, their mother-of-pearl or woodsy colors, their drowsy mood and twinkling light, the oils seem overrich—like a meal of pâté after pâté. Each picture seems to show a net of one sort or another that has been suffused with related tints or materials. Both the paintings, with their little tick-tock lines going this way and that, and the collages, composed of larger and simpler units, always seem to be about a very resolvable balance.

It's dizzying to read Rubin on the supersubtle distinctions between the collages, papier collés, and sculptures (made out of paper and cardboard) that Picasso and Braque began to produce in 1912. We read how a single work might contain a patch of wallpaper or wood done in a trompe l'oeil style and a piece of actual wallpaper, or how a collage might include newspaper-style lettering and pieces of actual newspaper. We relive the adventure of scrambling layer upon layer of fakeness. But when we stand before those pictures, the experience isn't dizzying; many of these collages are stunning, but we're too used to admiring works of art for their subtly differentiated surfaces.

Yet MOMA's show is also the most complete record ever of a rare moment, when two artists worked together as one, and it's absorbing to see (and think about) how Picasso and Braque meshed—who did what. Eventually I felt that the mixture in Cubism of headlong experimentalism and of something neutered and undramatic derives from its being a collaboration. One of the reasons MOMA has presented this art in such overwhelming detail is because it hasn't been totally clear how the partnership functioned. Picasso and Braque didn't work out of the same studio, and they didn't jointly produce single pictures; they also led separate lives with different friends. But from the fall of 1908, when they had already known each other for a little over a year, to the summer of 1914, when Braque was called up (their period of real intimacy was actually over some time in 1913), they worked in the spirit of research scientists. They checked on each other practically every day, and they kept in touch when one or the other was outside Paris.

Picasso's letters and notes to Braque are surprisingly—uncharacteristically—warm and affectionate, but they don't say much about the partnership. Braque's letters say far less; he often sent cards that simply said, "Hello." Braque was quiet, unexcitable, and huge; he was called a "gentle giant" by his contemporaries. Picasso, of course, was restless and short; he wanted to devour the competition, living and dead.

Braque was only a year younger than Picasso, but when they began working together he was barely known beyond a circle of young, experimental painters, while Picasso was already thought of as

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the leading avant-garde artist of the day. He rarely exhibited his work, but his reputation was such that he was often assumed to be the leader of any new development. Other artists were making Cubist pictures at the same time, but Picasso and Braque were clearly on a separate track. By 1909 or 1910 their paintings looked as if they were made by the same hand, and for a while, perhaps in a spirit of play, they didn't sign their pictures. (At times they even dressed in the same kind of clothes. And they both happened to be in love with women named Marcelle—Picasso called his Eva, and Braque's became Mme Braque.) The earliest commentators, most of whom were wowed by Picasso the person, got wrong who did what, and by the time Cubism had become a truly international movement neither man felt like sitting down and helpfully explaining how it happened. After the war began—Braque was wounded and discharged in 1915—they drifted apart. Although they remained friends, and 30 years later Picasso might bring a new companion over to Braque's for lunch and a look at new work, each man muttered and dramatically sighed about the other behind his back.

Scholarly research now shows that many, if not all, of the most characteristic details or aspects of Cubism were introduced by Braque. He was the first to use stencil lettering and to paste down actual wallpaper as an element—to make, in fact, the first papier collé. Trained as a housepainter, he introduced certain housepainter's tricks, such as making *faux bois* by running a comb through wet oil. It can be said now that Braque made the first Cubist sculpture. (He also had the first Marcelle.) Rubin believes, though, that the question of which man made the better pictures is a "canard." He goes on to say that Picasso's Cubist work "distinguishes itself in character and quality from the rest of his work" (by which he must mean that these pictures are at the summit of 20th-century art).

A viewer can have a very different and less clear-cut experience at the show. I found that the best paintings by both artists date from shortly after they teamed up. There's an erectness to the Cubist mesh of lines and to the faces and objects in the works from the middle of 1909 through some time in 1910. Picasso's few pictures of people from these years—an insectlike woman sewing; a man with a hat (nicknamed a portrait of Braque by the artists)—are forthright and commanding. Later in 1910 he made three extraordinary portraits of art dealers: Ambrose Vollard, Wilhelm Udhe, and Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler. In these works the new language of Cubism goes hand in hand with Picasso's talent as a psychologist and a spotter of the telling detail. It's as if the entire Cubist experiment was launched so that, with a few tiny zigzag lines, Picasso could draw in Uhde's little pursed mouth and neatly twitched lip, or Kahnweiler's fatuous smile and folded hands, or Vollard's massive dome, which seems to be exploding from too much brooding. These portraits are comparable to unforgettable characters in literature.

There are more sheerly beautiful paintings in the show, however, by Braque. His best pictures have a shimmery light and a particular sort of formal bloatedness, as if all the forms—rocks, sky, cups—were hollow. Even before he and Picasso began to work together, Braque had a desire to make a particular sort of image—one where a limited number of colors vibrate off each other to create a sort of visual hum. Braque wasn't interested in people as a subject or in shapes in space. Whether his subject was trees, tea kettles, or guitars, he wanted to show the way things reflected or absorbed atmosphere and light. In his best paintings he does something odd: he makes blandness a quality.

But the single strongest picture in the exhibition is Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, and it isn't a Cubist work at all. This very large painting of 1907 is Picasso's greatest achievement up to the point before he and Braque began working together. (It is the first work you see when you enter.) Five naked women, each with another sort of masklike and gruesome face, seem to soar up out of a well at the bottom of the picture, and threaten to topple out of the top. "Avignon" refers to a street in Paris where there was a bordello, but it isn't necessary to know this to perceive that the picture is about a deranging and dangerous moment.

Les Demoiselles generally hangs in one of MOMA's upstairs galleries where it has lots of white space around and above it. Here, framed by the show's entranceway, it appeared smaller and more intense, and it felt brand new. With its jutting and unconnected faces and body parts and its breathing, unfinished-yet-finished appearance, it is a much stranger picture than any of the Cubist works that follow it in date. No subsequent Picasso in the exhibition is as mysterious or alive, or gives an equal sense of sheer artistic discovery. The painting undercuts the exhibition. How are the Cubist pictures of the following seven or eight years any more of an advance? They're mincemeat compared to this.

Picasso's and Braque's Cubism may best be seen as an episode in the lives of the two painters. Braque's most famous comment about their collaboration was that he and Picasso were "two mountaineers roped together." It's an apt remark, especially in the light of *Les Demoiselles*. His and Picasso's joint venture makes sense as a time when Picasso, after scaling the heights with this painting and not knowing how to move on (or even how to come down), needed time and companionship. All of orthodox Cubism can be seen as a backtracking from, and a chewing over of aspects of, *Les Demoiselles*.

Picasso's most memorable comment about their collaboration, in turn, was his calling Braque "*ma femme*." The description, judged by the art and the temperament of each man, fits perfectly. Picasso's great subjects were sex, confrontation, and conquest—a conquest, or a capturing, of the moment—and he saw this terrain in a fierce and humorous way. In his best work we feel we've arrived in the middle of a pitched battle between Picasso and his subject. His years with Braque are among those when there are no strong tensions in his work; and these may be the only years when women are shady or absent from his pictures.

In some way Picasso really was married to Braque. He may have been more in a state of true marriage with the Frenchman than with any of the women he lived with or married. Picasso appears to have been a different man in these years; in his paintings he was somewhat anonymous, and later, in his collages, he was charming and elegant and cunningly intelligent. He seems pleased with his industrious self and with the world. At his best, though, in the various fiery and rash pictures leading up to *Les Demoiselles* and in his art from the late 1920s on, "industrious" or "pleased" are among the last things he'd be called.

And is there a connection between his all-absorbing affair with Braque and the quality of his three portraits of art dealers from this time? They're the finest pictures of men he ever made. In few other works from any period, of men or women, does he seem so patient, so much at the service of his subject.

One leaves the show believing that even if Picasso hadn't joined forces at this moment with Braque, he would have come to the realizations of his later art. The example of *Les Demoiselles*

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says so. Yet if the Cubist collaboration involved the bending of either man's will, it was Picasso's. Braque expanded his vision in the course of their work, but it's hard to believe that his consciousness was greatly changed. Based on his early pictures, he might have developed a duller, prettier sort of Cubism on his own, anyway. Picasso clearly provided the motor energy of Cubism. It seems, though, that the movement's underlying spirit—and maybe even Picasso saw it this way—belonged to Braque. •

Local Hero

BY SEAN WILENTZ

Let Them Call Me Rebel: Saul Alinsky, His Life and Legacy by Sanford D. Horwitt

(Knopf, 595 pp., $29.95)

The radical organizer's basic job is to be impertinent, harsh, a pain in the ass of the ruling class. Saul Alinsky, the legendary Chicago organizer, was certainly all those things, though he could be just a pain in the ass. Self-involved to the point of narcissism, Alinsky demanded a great deal of everyone, especially his family, his close friends, and his admirers. He had enormous charm, which was expressed in a flashy, hard-boiled bonhomie, and real street-wise charisma. Almost all of Alinsky's organizing drives benefited from his savage, sometimes madcap satire and showmanship, a subversive laughter that boosted morale among his troops and got the rest of the world to thinking. But Alinsky's was always a troubled, as well as a troublesome, spirit. To examine him honestly means to explore his inner turmoils without slighting his extraordinary acumen and achievements.

The received wisdom on these achievements rests on a partial misconception. It is that, beginning in the 1940s, Alinsky and his associates shifted the focus of lower-class activism by organizing working people in their neighborhoods instead of organizing them in their factories. Supposedly, Alinsky's great breakthrough was to appeal to the poor not as wage slaves, but as mistreated citizens. But in truth Alinsky built on long-established tendencies in the history of American radicalism and reform. Well back in the 19th century, urban and rural plebeian dissent had strong roots in communal networks and institutions. Alinsky may have updated the connections between popular protest and neighborhood life, but he was hardly the first to notice or to cultivate them.

Alinsky's initiatives also owed something to the many community-based projects that typified middle-class liberal reform in Progressive-era Chicago: the settlement houses, charity organizations, and university research programs for which the city was famous before Alinsky was born. His was a very Chicago kind of political life, in fact, steeped in an old and resilient tradition of tribal loyalties and block-by-block organizing that has affected the work of Chicagoans as far-flung in time and sensibility as Jane Addams, Richard J. Daley, and Jesse Jackson. Alinsky's contribution was to reverse the logic of Progressive-style reform, by wrestling control away from the professional do-gooders and handing it over to the people they were supposed to help. He did not invent neighborhood organizing, he changed it from the liberal, elite-led endeavor it had become around 1900 into something he hoped would be more hardheaded and democratic.

How he did it is a fascinating, often colorful story, but it is a complicated one, taking us into turf battles and store-front insurgencies never known outside Chicago and all-but-forgotten there now. Alinsky's peculiarities further compound his biographer's difficulties. In trying to publicize his causes and to elevate his status, Alinsky fell into compulsive fibbing about his past. (To this day the paperback edition of Alinsky's book, *Rules for Radicals*, carries an author's note that describes him "arrested and jailed from time to time." This supposedly shaped his ideas. It never happened.) Sanford Horwitt sets the record straight, taking pains to discuss what the discrepancies show about the longing for respect and attention that drove Alinsky in his work.

Horwitt (himself a policy adviser to various public interest groups) is insistent that Alinsky was neither a disturbed crank nor a left-wing idol, but a flawed man of enormous talent. Without glamorizing, he beautifully conveys the old big-city radical subculture in which Alinsky forged his personal style—a radicalism laced with bourbon, braggadocio, and offhand talk of women as "doxies" and "broads." Horwitt has also mastered the historical elements that swirled around his subject—no easy task, since that included (among other things) the University of Chicago sociology department, the underworld gangs of the 1920s, John L. Lewis and the CIO, Auxiliary Bishop Bernard Sheil and the Chicago Catholic Church, the Communist Party, the Kelly-Nash Democratic machine, Jewish self-hatred, Black Power of the 1960s—not to mention the New Deal and the War on Poverty.

Here and there, the effort is too comprehensive, crammed with fine details about things like Alinsky's personal finances that add little to the story. And at times Horwitt might have stepped back from his material and related it even more than he does to larger historical trends in American life. He might also have been more critical of Alinsky's legacy. Still, in writing one of the most thorough and sensitive of all the modern biographies of American radicals, Horwitt has recaptured a particular dissident understanding of politics and injustice that has been effaced by the fantasies and the intellectual exhaustion of the last two decades. It ought to be mandatory reading for anyone concerned with the enduring issues of American poverty.

Although he sometimes played the urban primitive, Alinsky was a product of Chicago's highly educated, academic-activist milieu. He was born in the Maxwell Street ghetto in 1909, the son of an unlovable Orthodox tailor and his fierce, manipulative second wife. Alinsky later claimed that he grew up in "one of the worst slums," but his childhood was hardly poverty-stricken; when the boy was seven, his father moved the family to a pleasant neighborhood on the West Side and went on to make a comfortable living. Alinsky's father seems only to have been a source of embarrassment and bad blood. The strongest early influence on Alinsky was his mother, Sarah, who doted on him while treating everyone else with supreme contempt. After suffering through a prolonged adolescent depression, Alinsky emerged as an eager student and (like his mother) a *plotka fuhrer*, an instigator. In 1926 he entered the preferred institution for bright local Jewish boys, the University of Chicago.

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One of the ironies of Alinsky's later life was that he led an organizing drive against the university, for it was the University of Chicago and its offshoots that forged his early interest in juvenile delinquency and other urban problems. As an undergraduate, Alinsky gravitated to the famous sociology department led by the pioneering urbanologists A. Ernest Watson Burgess and Robert Ezra Park. From these men, especially from Burgess, he imbibed ideas that soon remade American criminology, above all the iconoclastic notion that the origins of delinquency and other urban ills lay in social disorganization, not in heredity.

More immediately, Alinsky admired the professors' case-study, participant-observer research methods, in which scholars rubbed elbows with their subjects to understand Chicago's netherworld. Set loose by his instructors, Alinsky reveled in what turned out to be a blend of social science, urban adventurism, and titillation. (An early assignment from Burgess had him survey the sexual market of the city's dance halls.) His B.A. in hand, he enrolled in the department's graduate program, and chose as his dissertation topic a firsthand study of Al Capone's mob.

By now Alinsky had fully rebelled against his Orthodox upbringing. Slouching around town with Capone's enforcers, a compulsory cigarette pasted in his mug, Alinsky learned a new kind of street language, and the codes of honor and violence that went along with it. But before he could write up his findings, he hooked up with Clifford Shaw, an ex-U. of C. sociologist who had become the research director for a state criminology agency. Shaw was trying to bring the Chicago sociologists' methods and insights outside the academy, which the professors were reluctant to do. He had Alinsky work closely with an Italian youth gang. Before long, the two men were collaborating on a book. (It was never completed.) By 1934 Alinsky had abandoned his graduate work, taken a position as the staff sociologist at the Illinois State Penitentiary, and begun work with Shaw on an experimental anti-delinquency program, the Chicago Area Project.

The Area Project became the springboard for Alinsky's first major organizing work in the Chicago stockyards district. Originally, Shaw intended the project to be a direct challenge to the city's social work establishment (whose spiritual headquarters, Hull House, sat just a few blocks from Shaw's state agency office). Instead of treating delinquency as a quasi-clinical pathology, and instead of posing as generous pro-

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viders to the poor, project workers would try to shore up those local institutions whose failure had led, as they saw it, to a breakdown in morale and social decency. One-on-one work with the delinquents was essential to overcome the social barriers and apprehensions between the street kids and Shaw's people. Shaw also struck alliances with neighborhood groups—most important, with the parish churches—to form boys clubs, community committees, and other schemes to help youthful offenders avoid turning to crime.

Politics quickly entered the picture, once the regular social workers and delinquency psychologists began complaining about the insolent intrusions of Shaw and Alinsky. Still, though he was more reformist than the professors, Shaw did not want to make the project explicitly political. While he was fully aware that poverty was the major cause of the social disarray he encountered, Shaw stuck to the safe, orthodox goal of helping working-class immigrants acquire the kinds of values and controls that governed middle-class neighborhoods. Alinsky, by contrast, turned increasingly political in the mid-1930s, joining in the full range of Popular Front causes and espousing enough of the Party line to be regarded by some of his socialist and liberal friends as a fellow traveler.

Alinsky refused to join the Communist Party. He was, Horwitt suggests, at once too prudent and too ornery. Well before the Hitler-Stalin pact, he had rejected whatever attractions communism may have held out (though he was always willing to work with individual Communists, provided that he kept the upper hand and they agreed to leave their dogma at the door). His leftist sympathies did, however, attract him to the industrial unionism of John L. Lewis and the Congress of Industrial Organizations, which inspired him to redirect his own work. Never again could he blind himself to the glaring truth that without organization and political engagement, the poor would never improve their collective lot. In 1938, under the Area Project's auspices, he undertook a new effort on one of the shrines of the left-wing imagination, the Back of the Yards area that Upton Sinclair had immortalized a quarter century earlier in *The Jungle*. By 1940 he had broken with Shaw, going it alone in what he proclaimed to be a sincere attempt to redeem American democracy.

Over the next two decades, the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council (BYNC) and the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) that grew from it were the chief testing grounds of what came to be called Alinskyism: turning powerless, crime-ridden neighborhoods into activist communities, endowed with the political muscle to win more from the system than either the communities or the system's guardians thought possible. The first step was to assemble the various discordant elements in the neighborhood—above all the left-wing Packinghouse Workers' Organizing Committee, the Polish-dominated Catholic parishes, and the Irish Democratic Party. Alinsky understood that he hadn't a prayer without the help of locally respected leaders of these groups who appreciated the logic of such a coalition.

Fortunately, Alinsky had the knack of identifying such people—like the union official Herb March, Bishop Sheil of the Catholic Youth Organization, and a young, charming park director named Joe Meegan—and tapping into their energy and expertise. Once assembled, Alinsky's motley confederation won some impressive victories, supporting striking workers, pressuring neighborhood businessmen, and establishing a network of popular social clubs and ad hoc political groups—all to the consternation of the packers, the mainstream reformers, and the downtown power brokers. Considering the odds—and the initial minimal hopes for the Back of the Yards project—it was a smashing success.

The thrust of the BYNC's ethos of community self-help had nothing to do with getting poor people to snap to and lift themselves by their own bootstraps. Alinsky recognized that such talk is a moralistic evasion of poverty's systemic origins. It ignores the fact that free enterprise left too many people unable to afford boot leather, let alone the straps. He also recognized that all sorts of human values that middle-class people smugly assume are uniquely "middle class"—such as stamina, thrift, love for one's kin—are expressed by working-class people in ways that outsiders ignore or misconstrue.

At the same time, however, Alinsky never suffered the delusion that low-income neighborhoods were unaffected, psychologically and culturally, by their poverty: crime, addiction, and violence were, he insisted, real afflictions that would never be solved simply by job-training programs and better wages. Community self-help meant, rather, that the poor should enlarge upon their own pre-existing social ties, the bonds of kinship, religiosity, and neighborliness that enabled them to put up with their wretched conditions as best they could.

When Nights Were Full of Sex and Churches

Three chimes, and it's everyone I've ever slept with,
even once, even just barely, swept free into the light
of a cloudless moon, waving, *hi, hi*. They are drunk, pale,
silly upside down, their shoes dancing above their heads.
I can hear the happy sound of dangling genitals.
These many men, they are smiling, looking down, seeing me.
But why can't I see a blue cow with pretty eyes, a gold chicken
in a peasant sky? Why can't I be that red-haired woman
sleeping in Chagall's heavenly tree? Then I could dream
of wedding veil, floating higher, turning blue,
in a world made of colors and marital sex, happiness,
breasts painted into big circles, child-size hands calm.
In my night sky, I have only men, harmonizing:
There was a serpent who loved to sing, there was,
there was, hiss hiss. Thus, he forsook his serpenting
because he was in love, he was. Finished, they blow kisses
through transparent lips as though they've finally given me
something, but at the sound of horns at midnight,
they leave as spooks do: easily. A great painter is dead,
and my sky's been empty awhile. I open a real window,
calling after them: *I remember. I still have a red dress*
hanging behind the sheaves of blue gauze in my closet.

CATHLEEN CALBERT

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These ties would be reinforced by new local organizations, which would turn to helping rid the neighborhood of delinquency and brutality—and then to political action, marching on packing-house picket lines or demanding better schools and hospitals from the municipal bureaucracy.

None of this bore any taint of "small-is-beautiful" localism. Alinskyism's agenda had an overtly social democratic cast; the neighborhood was only, Alinsky wrote, "a specific starting point for a program of social reconstruction" that would eventually attend to "those larger socio-economic issues which converge upon the scene." He remained singularly vague about how this vast "reconstruction" would grow out of one neighborhood organizing drive (or even a dozen), a problem he never adequately worked through. But there was no time to worry about that in 1940; action (and publicity) took precedence over trying to solve everything at once.

Within months, liberal journalists, carefully nursed along by Alinsky, began writing of the BYNC as nothing less than a "miracle of democracy." With the backing of a newfound angel introduced by Bishop Sheil—the investment banker and department store heir Marshall Field III, shaken into philanthropic work by the Great Depression—Alinsky anticipated that he could spread his movement, under the banner of the Industrial Areas Foundation, all around the country.

For several reasons, Alinskyism as an organizational strategy proved difficult to transplant. The complicated balance of political forces in Chicago, so open to what Alinsky called his techniques of "mass jujitsu," did not always obtain elsewhere. IAF undertakings in Kansas City and South Saint Paul, though not outright failures, never quite replicated the Back of the Yards experience. On the national political scene, Alinsky forged a close personal alliance with John L. Lewis—a perfectly natural move, but also a misstep, coming as it did when Lewis made his celebrated and disastrous break with Franklin Roosevelt. Back in Chicago, meanwhile, Alinsky's aides had their hands full dealing with the continuing attempts by the official social work agencies and the Democratic machine to impugn their reputation and undercut their political base.

Yet Alinskyism as a frame of mind, as an approach to democratic politics, had an appeal that overcame the ups and downs of Alinsky's organizations. He tried to spell out his ideas in *Reveille for Radicals*, published in 1945. After spend-

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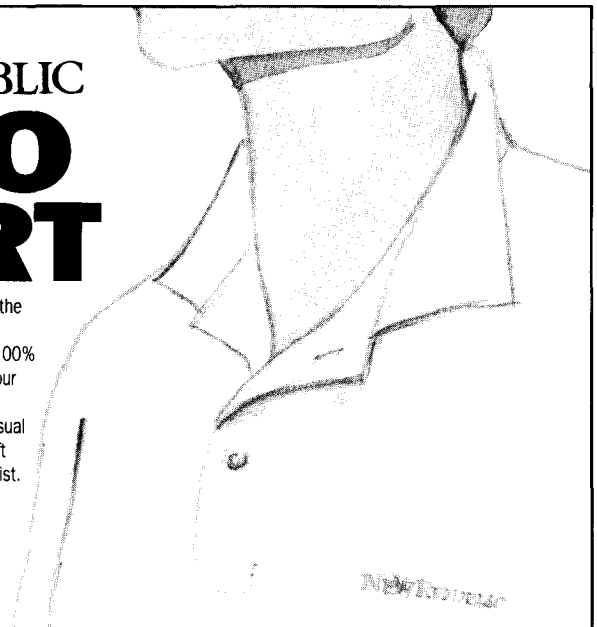

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ing several weeks on the *New York Times* best-seller list, *Reveille* established itself as one of the widest-read radical tracts in American history. As Horwitt confirms, the book is uneven. Ambitious in all things, Alinsky fancied himself a 20th-century Tom Paine, which he was not. He devoted himself far too much to a windy, predictably bare-knuckled invocation of the radical heroes of American history and the American Radical Idea, which all but buried his practical information about community organizing. Even when he got down to cases, Alinsky's descriptions had an oddly abstract air, largely because some of the projects he wished to depict as part of a burgeoning national movement had barely gotten off the ground. He wound up begging important questions about his so-called "People's Organizations," above all about how they might devise a plausible political program that transcended purely neighborhood concerns.

Still, *Reveille for Radicals* succeeded in capturing a distinctive kind of democratic radical mood that flourished in the 1940s until the beginning of the cold war. Paramount here was Alinsky's critique of liberalism—or, rather, of American liberalism's two major strains, which he continued to criticize with increasing sophistication over the rest of his life. The first kind of liberalism is a modern Mugwumpery. Growing up in Brooklyn in the 1960s, I learned to call it shmiberalism. Shmiberalism is less a form of politics than an exercise in moral outrage. With some laudable intentions, shmiberals assume that the poor and powerless are the abject, pitiable victims of other people who, if not wholly evil, have misplaced their sense of social virtue in the pursuit of wealth and power. With only the dimmest sense of the structures of exploitation, shmiberalism appeals to people's compassion rather than to their interests, to induce to write checks, to sign petitions, to volunteer their time, to elect other right-thinking citizens who will throw out the rascals and help educate the noble poor. And with reference to those poor people, shmiberals speak constantly of "we" and "them," of how "we" want "them" to behave, of how "we" want "them" to prosper just like "we" do.

As it spread among the modern upper middle class, shmiberalism lost some of its original Brahmin tone and became more of a suburban way of life. Yet while it has grown in popularity, its basic distrust of power and self-interest—including the power and the self-interest of poor people—has doomed it to repeated frustrations. These, in turn, have made shmiberalism vulnerable to an otherworldly self-righteousness that breeds intolerance, to a moral perfectionism that inhibits coalition-making and from time to time has led some shmiberals into a fascination with the secular millennialism of the Communist left.

The second type of liberalism is managerialism. It holds out no illusions about power and self-interest. Managerial liberals make an obsession out of original sin; they forswear perfectionist ideologies; they refuse to romanticize the poor or to demonize the powerful. Yet in their own pragmatic way, managerial liberals hold out great hope for reform and social justice, through a combination of economic growth, progressive taxation, and centralized administration. The key word here is administration, for while managerial liberals might talk about the uses of power, their instinct is to reduce political conflicts to administrative problems. Poverty strikes liberal managers as a social dysfunction that can be ironed out by trustworthy policy experts without having to make hard choices or dramatic institutional changes.

Nurtured by the New Deal and the mobilization for World War II, managerialism believes in the essential fairness of American capitalism, provided that it is stimulated by Government to provide enough for everyone and is gently nudged by the policy-makers to spread its benefits more than the market alone allows. In modern America, the managerial liberal insists, something like pluralist democracy and equality of opportunity can be secured from the top down; too much democracy from the bottom up can get messy, noisome, dangerously populistic.

Alinsky the radical was more attuned to the managerial view of humankind than to the shmiberal view; the hardest blows in *Reveille for Radicals* fell on starry-eyed uplifters who saw the world in their own image. "Only a fool," he wrote, "would step into a community dominated by materialistic standards and self-interest and begin to preach ideals." His training with Burgess and Shaw showed through in his insistence on taking people as they are, on working with them, not for them.

But Alinsky's contempt for managerialism was no less great. Delinquency, crime, and the poverty that encouraged them were not administrative problems, but part of the normal functioning of the American economic and political system. Too many of the significant institutions and individuals—from the city halls and police headquarters to the corporate board rooms, big labor unions, and the welfare industry itself—had a stake in keeping that system more or less intact. Simply spraying tax revenues around would be just as worthless as preaching to people about their bootstraps, so long as the apportionment of power remained so badly skewed. Inevitably most of the money would wind up lining the pockets of the already powerful and their cronies, or of unscrupulous, upwardly mobile profiteers. Whatever was left would go to trying to adjust the poor to society as it is, not to attacking the social injustices that contributed to their maladjustment. Only the poor themselves could change the situation, by using the available democratic tools to force the issues of crime, housing, health care, delinquency, and the rest, and (once victorious) exercise enough control to ensure that no one could corrupt or snatch away their gains.

It is almost impossible to recall how much resonance such radical talk could have in the mid- to late 1940s, in places long since regarded as bastions of establishment liberalism. Two years before *Reveille* appeared, James Conant, the president of Harvard, announced in the *Atlantic Monthly* that the time was ripe for an invigorated American radicalism, promulgated by "fanatic believer[s] in equality" who would break with big labor and organized capital to get to the roots of injustice. Some years later the young Harvard professor Arthur Schlesinger Jr. (then a scholar of the history of American radicalism) wrote *The Vital Center*, an anti-Communist manifesto that was saturated by the language of radicalism and social democracy, delivered in the name of what Schlesinger called "the free left." As late as 1949, it was possible for respectable liberals and social democrats—and not just at Harvard—to think in terms of a massive redistribution of wealth by restricting private inheritance.

By the mid-1950s such talk had been eclipsed, for all the familiar reasons. Most of the democratic leftists who did not retreat into an ironic mood drifted into a love affair with the vacuous Stevenson. Liberalism-as-lifestyle supplanted radical democracy. But there were many important exceptions, including diehard social democrats, civil rights organizers, and Saul Alinsky. With his community base, Alinsky was positioned to keep his projects alive, and to begin new ones. His almost maniacal work habits (which survived personal traumas, marital tragedies, and busted friendships) helped. So did his unfailing ability to attract prodigiously talented young co-workers, such as Nicholas von Hoffman in Chicago and Cesar Chavez in California.

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INTELLECTUALS AND RELIGION

Recently *The New York Times Magazine* carried an article on the "return to religion" among intellectuals. From Harvard to Berkeley, among both professors and students, and amid inquisitive people generally, there is an undeniable renewal of interest in the questions traditional religion raises and seeks to answer. This interest is largely a result of the failures of secular substitutes for religion (such as rationalism, narcissism, technological utopianism, aestheticism, and extremist political ideologies) to give abidingly satisfying answers to the truly significant puzzles in life: goodness, suffering, love, death, and the meaning of it all.

By no means, however, does this religious reawakening entail having any truck with Jimmy Swaggart's weird motel bills or Tammy Bakker's real-life impersonations of Imelda Marcos, or embracing the ersatz gods of dog-eat-dog individualism, consumerism, or America First. Nor does the religious renaissance imply a retreat from working for peace and justice. Rather, there is an awareness that, in the words of Jean Bethke Elshtain, religious commitment "can help further social reform," and that religion can supply the ethical bedrock upon which to make political commitments which are far more solid than those based on passing ideologies and enthusiasms. Nor does the new openness to religion signify a hostility to science, but rather an appreciation of the limits of science and the dangers of pseudo-scientific messianisms.

The New York Times Magazine article discussed the NEW OXFORD REVIEW as part of this "return to religion," and rightly so. We at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW are spearheading today's intellectual fascination with what Daniel Bell terms "the sacred." We are particularly interested in exploring religious commitments which result in progressive social consequences, as exemplified by such giants as Dorothy Day, Archbishop Tutu, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Lech Walesa, Martin Luther King Jr., Cesar Chavez, and Archbishop Romero. And we probe the literary riches offered by such greats as Ignazio Silone, Graham Greene, Thomas Merton, W.H. Auden, Flannery O'Connor, and T.S. Eliot.

An ecumenical and literary monthly edited by lay Catholics, we've been characterized by the University of Chicago's Martin E. Marty as "lively" and by *Newsweek* as "thoughtful and often cheeky." And there's no denying the *Library Journal*'s verdict that we will "doubtless command increasing attention."

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Above all, Alinsky was not stuck in his ways, though he sometimes seemed to be. The sociology of lower-class Chicago changed rapidly after the war, as Southern blacks and Puerto Ricans displaced much of the Eastern European immigrant working class. Alinsky came to understand that his old constituency had gradually achieved a degree of mainstream acceptance. The new arrivals, coming from very different places, could not be expected to link up with the established institutions, not least because the white ethnics, with a racism made all the more passionate by limited resources, treated "the coloreds" like a barbaric horde. At the BYNC, the faces of the rank and file clenched in racial hatred. Caught between his loyalists and his better judgment, Alinsky tried to muddle through, unsure about organizing the newcomers. By the late 1950s, though, while sticking by his white ethnic wise-guy mannerisms and his AFL-CIO taste in clothes, he began thinking seriously about attacking residential segregation in Chicago, the most segregated city in the North.

It took Alinsky six years of false starts, missed signals, and tortuous negotiation before he officially launched the Temporary Woodlawn Organization (the "Temporary" was later dropped) in 1961. The instigating confrontation involved a University of Chicago urban renewal plan that would have dislodged tens of thousands of poor blacks and whites in Hyde Park and neighboring Woodlawn. (Within months the group had spread across the South Side, picketing and boycotting segregated schools, protesting merchants who gave short weight, withholding rents for slumlords, bringing together block clubs, fraternal groups, and the black churches.) As before, Alinsky and his associates found amazing skills at the grass roots; more miraculously, the Woodlawners pried a measure of recognition and influence from Richard Daley, the king of white ethnic Chicago. On one occasion, Alinsky even managed to engineer a joint appearance of Daley and the Rev. Ralph Abernathy at a TWO convention—a symbolic moment of real substance, unimaginable only a few years later.

Beneath this frenzy, the Alinskyites quietly discovered the hugeness of the task they had set for themselves, and the magnitude of their own naïveté. TWO was splendid, for example, when it came to organizing tenants against slumlords; great cheers went up when malevolent rack-renters buckled and conveyed their building over to the community. Only in time, as von Hoffman recalls, did they realize they were being snookered by landlords who were only too happy to rid themselves of real estate turkeys. But as Horwitt shows, TWO was able to distract attention from its failings (including its own financial difficulties) and to portray itself as an exemplary community organization and the most important new civil rights organization in the city. In 1962 Charles Silberman published a series in *Fortune* on race relations and held up TWO as a model alternative to the "welfare colonialism" that was failing black America. Two years later, when Silberman collected his pieces as *Crisis in Black and White*, American ghettos were in flames—and Alinsky's stock began to climb.

Suddenly Alinskyism—or what looked to some like Alinskyism—seemed to be everywhere, under a variety of rubrics. The young radicals of SDS and SNCC, though not in any way taught by Alinsky, turned to community organizing in rundown neighborhoods, black and white. In California, the Alinskyite veteran Chavez built the United Farm Workers and launched the great grape boycott, a paradigm of the kind of united front of the poor and the middle class that Alinsky increasingly deemed imperative.

More unexpectedly, Alinskyism now had sympathizers in the citadels of federal power, among the closet radicals (many of them products of the University of Chicago sociology department) who were designing the centerpiece of Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, the Community Action Program. It was CAP that, in the famous phrase of its program policy director Richard Boone, pressed for "maximum feasible participation of the poor." If Boone and his colleagues had their way, a sizable chunk of federal dollars would have bypassed the social work professionals and city hall pols, and funded community organizations to be conducted and administered as far as possible by low-income people. When the first of CAP's demonstration projects got under way in Syracuse in 1965, its director selected Alinsky as an on-the-scene éminence grise.

It would be wrong to give Alinsky all that much credit for the War on Poverty's many clear-cut successes, such as Project Head Start, the local health clinic programs, and the programs designed to reduce hunger and malnutrition. But neither is it correct to consider the failures of the 1960s a fair test of Alinskyism. From the beginning, Alinsky himself was wary of what the Government was up to. Several months before he headed for Syracuse, he actually denounced the federal anti-poverty plan as "a prize piece of political pornography" propelled mainly by shmiberal moralism to the exclusion of political power for the poor.

He was prescient: by the summer of 1965, it became obvious that neither the White House nor Congress nor the nation's Mayors took "maximum feasible participation" at all seriously. Too much anti-poverty funding was funneled through the city halls, winding up in neat little scams for the old-fashioned political grafters and the new-fashioned grafters who palmed themselves off as poverty-planning professionals. One by one, the closet radicals departed the field in frustration. The Syracuse project—which managed, despite everything, to stir up some creative political tension—failed to gain refunding. Robbed of any radical edge or potential, many of the community anti-poverty programs, especially in the big cities, turned into grotesque parodies of the ideas that had inspired them.

Other self-described radicals, with a few exceptions like Chavez, gave Alinsky little more satisfaction. The white militants of SDS, though sharp critics of managerial liberalism and champions of grass-roots democracy, were also afflicted by a disguised form of shmiberalism, expressed in their romanticizing of the poor and their increasingly Manichaean view of social democracy. (Not surprisingly, a new kind of shmiberal, Third Worldist pro-communism lay just down the road for portions of the New Left.) As for black radicalism, Alinsky's initial affinities with Black Power soured once the battle cry of community control became in part the vehicle of a resurgent black nationalism, coupled with the opportunism of some local leaders. Played out against a background of bad faith and divided loyalties, many black community control struggles, like the Ocean Hill-Brownsville fracas, degenerated into heartbreaking calamities. Just as tragically, Alinsky's personal piques and jealousies led him to keep his distance from the most effective black radical of all, Martin Luther King Jr.

Still, if Alinsky was put off by what happened to 1960s radicalism, he remained very much an undoctrinaire radical, willing to take situations as he found them, keeping the pressure squarely on those who held the power that poor people needed. In 1965, while still engaged at Syracuse, he agreed to help organizing efforts in Rochester, where inner-city rioting had shaken the serene paternalism of the local corporate giants, Xerox and Eastman Kodak. Under the aegis of a new acronym, FIGHT, Alinsky and his aides helped mastermind a coalition consisting of an explicitly black mass organization, the white and black Protestant churches, and middle-class white liber-

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als, aided by some backstairs help from a well-placed contact, Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Although FIGHT never achieved all of Alinsky's hopes during his three-year involvement, it did manage (after considerable turbulence sparked by some particularly inventive pieces of Alinskyite theater) to win formal recognition as the chief representative of the city's black poor, and job-training concessions from Kodak.

Alinsky died in 1972, having spent his last years establishing a training center for organizers and writing *Rules for Radicals*, his plea for a new activism connecting the poor and the middle class. Nearly 20 years on, many of his best efforts have all but disappeared, swallowed up in the late-1960s vortex or transformed by forces far greater than Alinsky and his devotees could withstand. (The BYNC has become a white homeowners' association; TWO was absorbed years ago by the social service bureaucracy.)

Horwitt thinks he finds Alinsky's legacy alive and well, however, in the scores of community action, consumer advocate, and environmental protection groups inspired by his example. Maybe. Surely grass-roots organizations have kindled a dynamism that almost always is ignored on the evening news—or is identified solely with Jesse Jackson. As Horwitt observes, Alinsky's successors at the Industrial Areas Foundation have been particularly impressive at launching organizing drives in various cities.

But latter-day Alinsky-style organizing has in many cases cut itself off from some of its political roots, in order to raise the required funds and organize mass support from amid today's anonymous metropolitan sprawl. Instead of genuine local organizers, we have quasi-corporate forms of door-to-door deployment, with canvassers working (on commission!) to reap the bucks for some worthy cause. You open your door to find not neighbors bidding you to fight the common fight, but earnest young strangers, all ready to raise your consciousness and take your check, before disappearing into the night. There is a legacy here, but it isn't all Alinsky's. It's mostly the Fuller brush man's.

Still, there is a larger legacy of Alinskyite radicalism, and it comes with additional ironies. One reads almost with a sense of nostalgia Horwitt's accounts of the conditions that Alinsky tried to correct. The grinding poverty, the segregation, the everyday injustices of 20 years ago seem trifles now. In 1966 it was enough for Alinsky to promise, as a concession to Kodak, that FIGHT representatives would tag along with job trainees after work to make sure that they didn't waste their wages in the corner tavern: drink was the main worry off the job. Try to imagine such simple solutions today, in cities where the crack cartels have filled the job-training void, where the training begins with six-year-olds, where the people with courage enough to fight back, the people Alinsky would have turned to as organizers, run the very real risk of getting their brains blown out by some thug who also never had a chance.

Had he lived, Alinsky would have been shouting from the rooftops about how federal policy has contributed mightily to the deterioration. His shouts might have made some difference. With that thought, though, comes the nagging reflection that the radical critique of the welfare state may have unintentionally helped pave the way for everything from Reaganism to neoliberalism. In the 1970s and 1980s, certainly, an intellectual paralysis crept in, once the critics of the parasitic welfare bureaucracy faced up to the growing power of people who aimed to scrap the welfare state altogether, and to replace it with the old-time religion of moralism and the market.

Many familiar radical slogans—that you can't just throw money at problems, that the welfare system is a form of social control—came back to haunt the radical reformers when Reaganite writers like George Gilder put them to use, and linked them with sometimes bland, sometimes vicious portrayals of the poor as parasites. It reached the point where a struggle was needed to defend such basic (and miserly and discriminatory) programs as Aid to Families with Dependent Children—old programs that arose from the long-ago pressures of destitute mothers. With all but a few prominent liberals seemingly disarmed, bashing the poor became a national blood sport, part of a growing "consensus" that the indigent were responsible for their own indigence, that giving money to such people was an unnatural act.

What, given all this, is left of Alinskyism, as an ideal and a strategy? The answer is less obvious than it might have been even a decade ago. So badly have drugs, AIDS, violence, and thoughtlessness ripped away at the fabric of poor people's lives that it is hard for outsiders to see much use in anything like political organizing. Alinskyism, after all, pins its hopes on thickening and politicizing those networks that the poor have already established for themselves to make their poverty more bearable. More and more, however, those networks have unraveled in large parts of urban America, or become so intertwined with crime and self-destruction that it's hard to know where to begin. And even where political organizing might be possible, the nation's political institutions, from the city halls on up, have become so compromised by bureaucratic special interests and private corporate power that it's hard to know how much any movement from below can achieve.

Yet Alinskyism is helpful precisely in looking at this situation squarely. It would be worse than folly to heed those who, out of a combination of sentimentalism and misguided ethnic pride, deny the existence of an underclass (much less those who are tempted to fall for Sharptonesque charges of "genocide"). Poverty is never pretty, Alinsky said. Reagan- and Bush-era poverty is all the more hideous, worse than Dickensian in its miseries—including the miseries that some of the poor inflict on themselves and each other. To get anywhere, people who live and work in poverty-stricken areas must have the means to do collectively what they cannot hope to do individually: repair some of the damage to their own communities by restoring in their own ways the imperatives of working-class decency and respect where they have broken down.

But, as Alinsky recognized, this change will not come about through official boot-camp discipline or colonial policing. It will not come through the missionary efforts of policy experts and middle-class reformers, who speak the language of "we" and "them." It will not come from the enthusiasm generated by any single political candidate or set of political candidates. Nor will it come simply from federal largess (although money and services are needed on a massive, federal scale far greater than the President's "voluntarism thing"). The realities surrounding American poverty, including the cynicism poisoned by racial hatreds, have never responded terribly well to such cures, in part because they are imposed from a distance, by outsiders who think that they alone have the answers.

What remains of Alinskyism, then, is the margin of hope that the poor themselves, starting out with their own institutions and networks, can be encouraged to organize on their own in democratic movements that surpass anything Alinsky (or King) had in mind. As bad as the situation looks from the outside, low-income people's communal resources are far from spent. Outside of elections, some of the poorest Americans (most conspicuously the homeless) have at least won some public attention and concern, if as yet only minimal political responses. It is impossible, mean-

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while, to imagine David Dinkins's victory in New York without the mobilizing efforts of everything from the inner-city trade unions and churches to the informal ties built in the projects and on the playgrounds. So much more remains for such movements to do, in cleaning up the crack houses, getting out the word on AIDS—and then getting on with the job of applying political pressure everywhere (especially in places like Mayor Dinkins's City Hall) to secure the kinds of money, services, credit, and power necessary to live in modern America.

It's a margin of hope, no more. No blueprint or panacea, and not all that much optimism, grows from Alinsky's legacy. To succeed politically, such an effort would require complementary self-organizing drives within the middle class, itself hard-pressed by diminished public and private resources, and rightly jealous of what becomes of its tax dollars. It would have to grapple with organizing problems far more daunting than anything Alinsky had to face, even in the depths of the Great Depression: single mothers barely scraping by on welfare or lousy wages (or, in alarming numbers, simply too cracked-out to scrape by); atrociously underfunded school systems at or beyond the breaking point; teenage criminals armed with space-age weapons; and much more. Such an effort would need to enunciate concrete programs of political and institutional reform bold enough to shake up public officials and to inspire millions of people who have given up on politics. And it would have to do all these things without turning into a creature of demagogues, vigilantes, crooks, and mere politicians. Still, this margin of hope is more than anyone can realistically retrieve from the marketplace moralism of today's conservatives, or from the wishful thinking of the liberals that the welfare state is all America needs.

"Poverty," Alinsky wrote, "means not only lacking money but lacking power." When he figured this out in the 1930s and 1940s, he updated an old tradition of communal organizing that stretched back through the Populists to the early labor movement. Now Alinskyism is itself badly in need of further updating and expansion, to fit the nation's current, more miserable situation. It's not the whole solution, or even a large fraction of one. But it may help establish a democratic seat of reason after all these years of pandering and pain.

SEAN WILENTZ, professor of history at Princeton University, is currently working on a historical study of the origins of democracy in the United States.

Saint Lulu

BY DAVID THOMSON

Louise Brooks by Barry Paris

(Knopf, 640 pp., $30)

Knowledge is so certain, so deadly, in her gaze. Did Louise Brooks know how it would all turn out? Was she in control, or just an unhindered example of abandon? Can running wild have a purpose? Can grace be chaotic and feral? How did the real Brooks accommodate the screen's brief witch and the mythic nymph? How was it, even after death, that some touch of Lulu got at the *New York Times* obituarist, who added that "Miss Brooks has no known survivors"? Was she, then, merely a lost, elderly, finally deceased woman up in Rochester, New York, 1929's best carnal *now* betrayed by all the ordinary future imperfects of arthritis, emphysema, booze, and the general loss of nowness? Did Brooksie ever know what had happened to her, or why?

Brooks was always a turn-on in the dark, and so is this book about her. Its jacket has the sleek oiled drag of young skin. Move the book into the light, and there is the aphrodisiac gloss of Brooks herself; you meet the stare of a modern icon, a picture that taunts your inability to touch the real thing. The photographs on the jacket are from the brief full moon of Louise Brooks, that unaccountable phenomenon who was a promising dancer with St. Denis and Shawn, a semi-naked flash at the Follies, a skittish player in a run of minor American movies, before G. W. Pabst asked her to go to Berlin to play Lulu in *Pandora's Box* in 1929. What she accomplished in that movie was the most intense and intimate acting, or being, that the movies had yet known.

But *Pandora's Box* was hardly seen in America, and the bizarre career of its star led steadily in the direction of failure and ignominy. By the late 1930s she was no worse looking than Rita Hayworth or Hedy Lamarr, but she was out of the business, and in a spiral of degradation as epic as Lulu's. She vanished from celebrity for nearly 20 years. Then she was slowly reclaimed by scholars, lovers, and fantasists. Even before she died in 1985, there was a small army proclaiming her to have been the screen's truest, darkest, and most moving femme fatale, wondering whether she had ruined herself as a gesture to the world every bit as teasing and passionate as the way she looked at a camera. Biography is a harsh test for such a legend. Still, biography had to come; and if Barry Paris has written a flawed book, uneasy in its stance, it is a necessary and stimulating book. It is itself an important part of Brooks's life after death.

Brooks was never more famous or hallowed than in her last few years. In "going away" to Rochester in the 1950s, she was either drunk and slipping through the holes in her life, or a resolute legend sure of how this stupid world would have to search her out. She needed to be in some unlikely place if she was to be rediscovered. Her cult found strength and bloom in the shadow of Eastman House, where curator James Card kept some of her old films. Card had loved her, too, and she had always known which men were under her sway; which loved the woman, which foresaw the image. Brooksie stayed in Rochester, even after she had fallen out with Card. There was enough of the archivist in him that he could not quite give up family and order for her. In time, she forgave him the timidity.

Thereafter she met and communed with a number of cineastes, men ardent about imagery: Kevin Brownlow, William K. Everson, John Kobal, et al. She was available to be visited, and mercifully one caller, Ricky Leacock, came with camera and tape recorder. But the visitor she waited for, the lover/poet/Ripper she deserved and required, was Kenneth Tynan. He would bring her the kind of canonization that she understood, a *New Yorker* profile, "The Girl in the Black Helmet." This allowed Brooks a second shot at nowness; having been Pabst's Lulu in *Pandora's Box*, a lethal stare into the camera from beneath the clasp of shining black silk (theoretically hair, more evidently fate), she could now be a piercing, difficult, ravaged

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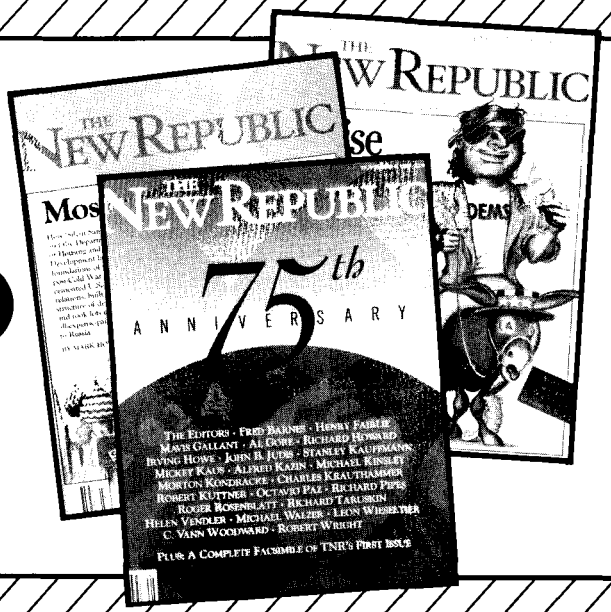

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woman sitting up in bed, flirting, coughing, writing, remembering, romancing, dying yet poised, triumphant yet dangerous. Kids turned up on her doorstep, eager to show her how completely they had acquired her old look, with bangs like breasts; and in 1982 Alfred Knopf published some of her essays as *Lulu in Hollywood*, without stooping to check her facts. The atmosphere was everything. "Lulu" was so vividly resurrected that there was no occasion to ask how reliably she had ever existed.

As far as I can tell, Paris never met Brooks, though he seems to have sought her on behalf of the Wichita Film Group, for a homage. That was in 1971, by which time Brooks had learned that better tributes came if she stayed at home in bed, in the small apartment that smelled of gin. But Brooks and Paris were fellow Kansans: Brooks was born in Cherryvale, a brick and zinc burg, in 1906, the child of a stern lawyer and a culturally ambitious mother. Paris has had access to the family and to Brooks's journals (which are terse enough to suggest she practiced writing more in her head than on the page). Paris is very good on the smothering effect of the open plains. Still, was there any way that the willful Brooksie could endure being understood? Paris provides an absorbing picture of Brooks's rivalry with her pretty, aspiring, and pretentious mother, a woman who always felt that Louise was horning in on *her* life. The deliberate withholding of early affection is deeply suggestive.

We can see in a photograph how handsome, how lively, how opinionated this mother was; but God help her next to a 1921 shot of her daughter at a preposterous 15, bristling in black taffeta, one leg flipped back, the glance three-quarters over the shoulder, so modern, so hip, so full of mischief that the face could even now beat out Winona Ryder in most casting contests. It's Eve daring the snake: enough to make pythons take out insurance. Yet our Winona Ryder promises to be a star and an actress for years to come. So what happened to Brooks?

Was she ahead of her time? Can you be *too* sexy? Or was she too scathing or challenging for plain old American success and adulation? In her American movies, Brooks was dark, shining, as quick as a flea, droll, a touch contemptuous, but hardly used. Paris overdoes "every little breeze" whispering Louise in the mid-1920s; Brooks was, in fact, only one in a throng of starlets. But neither does he properly examine the implausibility of his radiant subject's extinction. Certainly Louise Brooks could have been as big as Gloria Swanson or Colleen Moore. But maybe she was as big, or bigger, for now the public knows her better than those two. Was she in it for the resurrection? Being an enigma, being lost, is risky; but if it works, it may work forever.

Once he has got Brooksie out of Kansas, Paris makes skillful arrangements of much that has been said before. *Louise Brooks* is a complete assembly of old material, but it's still the gaps in her life that draw our attention. Why was she suddenly dropped as a Denishawn dancer? Why did she never quite catch on at Paramount? Why did Paramount let her go? Why, after *Pandora's Box* in Berlin in 1929, was she not carried back on the shoulders of a relay of swimmers? How did that career trail away into second-feature Westerns? Did she really work behind the counter at Saks, and was she a call girl operating out of the Barbizon? Why was William Paley her lifelong protector?

Paris has talked to Paley and drawn a brisk, courteous, fond tribute from him, to the effect that he realizes now, nearly 60 years later, that he wasn't worldly enough for Brooksie. And Paris has drawn upon the letters Brooks exchanged, and the phone calls she enjoyed, with Card, Brownlow, Roddy McDowall, and others. He has also had to rely rather more than he might have wished on what Brooksie herself claimed about her life. Once retired, once old, once removed from desire, show people are not the most sober witnesses of their own lives. They are only pretending they have given up on those goodies. *That* is the last act. Brooks said that she was not mainstream show business. What else was she? Not a stamp collector, or a lepidopterist. She liked to air her scorn for Hollywood, yet when she wrote it was show business that preoccupied her.

Hedged in between screenplays and publicity, actresses lose track of fact. Brooks had an advantage: so little was left on record. She could survey her own life as a twilight of anecdote. Let me consider three Brooks stories—two of them are vital to Paris's shaping of her life—that he is inclined to accept. When she was nine, she said, she was sexually molested by a housepainter named Mr. Flowers. Paris regards this as the "Rosebud" of Brooks's life. Yet the incident was not recorded until the 1970s, in a letter to Herman Weinberg, and in her talk with Tynan. With Tynan, she got the painter's name wrong, called him Mr. Feathers. Still tickled? And she was ready to enlist him in the review Tynan might make of that movie, her life:

> When I was nine years old, Mr. Feathers molested me sexually. Which forged another link between me and Lulu: when *she* had *her* first lover, she was very young, and Schigolch, the man in question, was middle-aged. I've often wondered what effect Mr. Feathers had on my life. He must have had a great deal to do with forming my attitude toward sexual pleasure. For me, nice, soft, easy men were never enough—there had to be an element of domination—and I'm sure that's all tied up with Mr. Feathers. . . . Incidentally, I told my mother about Mr. Feathers, and—would you believe it? She blamed *me*! She said I must have led him on. It's always the same, isn't it?

I do not mean to suggest that nothing happened with the feathery Flowers. Nor do I mean to deny that there was psychological damage, all the worse if the child's reports were refuted, or turned against her. But I am not sure a mother would have done that in 1916. Sixty years after the event, its significance had become dramatic or literary. It was a scene from The Louise Brooks Story, appropriate but elusive. On another occasion, Brooks spoke of being "loused up by my Lolita experiences." But a reader as discerning as she aspired to be might have noted that in the novel it is Humbert who is blessed by love, and they ruined. Lo is a somewhat unknowing observer. So we are left to ponder the weight of outrage, rivalry with the mother, and the longing to be a character.

Next item: in 1925 Brooks accompanied Herman Mankiewicz to the New York opening of *No, No Nanette*. He was there to review the musical for the *Times*, but he got so drunk he passed out. "And so," says Paris, "the secretly literate Louise rose to the occasion, took notes, and wrote it for him!" This claim was made (as far as I can tell) in a filmed interview with Kevin Brownlow and David Gill, done in the late 1970s. Brooks may indeed have manned the typewriter; for *Citizen Kane*, the same Mankiewicz wrote a scene in which the drama critic is so smashed that Kane must complete the review that hammers Mrs. Kane. Still, 50 years after opening night there was nobody around to dispute it or to vouch for it. Moreover, Mankiewicz was a career drunk. He knew how to drink and compose at the same time. Of course, it's a magical incident; it leads nowhere, except to confirm Brooks' knowing, clandestine look.

No, No is a small worry next to *Naked On My Goat*. This is the autobiography that Brooksie said she had written, 400 pages, done in the 1950s, before she decided that it wouldn't do and threw it down the incinerator. Card came closest to that book; he saw pieces of it, she read some of it to him; and it was Card who suggested the title she loved, from

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Goethe's *Faust*, where the young witch taunts her elders:

> You need powder and petticoat,
> You matrons old and shoddy;
> But I sit naked on my goat
> And show my fine young body.

Brooks did write a number of essays, which began appearing in learned and European film journals in the late 1950s: on Lillian Gish and Garbo; on ZaSu Pitts; on Pabst and *Pandora's Box*; on Chaplin, W. C. Fields, Humphrey Bogart and the making of *Beggars of Life*; and, most interesting, on Pepi Lederer, one of the lesbians Brooksie experimented with. And there were a few others, never published. They were well written, intelligent, chilly, a little disdainful, and studied—the work of someone anxious to impress. When Knopf published *Lulu in Hollywood*, an incomplete collection of these essays, William Shawn's introduction marveled that an actress could write so well. Of course, he had never tried Mary Astor or Bette Davis or Mercedes McCambridge.

Nor did he know enough film history to ask the right questions. Paris supplies an appendix of errata to *Lulu in Hollywood*, which is a step in the right direction. Brooks's writings are a focus for lively debate. They leave no doubt that she perched, like an owl, or a bird of prey, above the movie crowd. She works so hard to sound shrewd and superior, the style is uncomfortable in more than short pieces. I still find it easier to believe that a proud, struggling, and alcoholic Brooks gave up on attempts at a book rather than achieved pieces of writing, let alone a coherent account of her collapsed life. I am surprised that Paris has not even checked whether she had access to an incinerator in those writing years.

In 1978, in the small British magazine *Focus on Film*, Brooks published a four-page essay, "Why I Will Never Write My Memoirs." Not "Why I Wrote But Destroyed Them." That essay, for reasons that remain obscure, was not included in *Lulu in Hollywood*. (Perhaps her publisher had hopes of dissuading her from such finality.) But in the essay she named a reason that is more than plausible for an old woman who had little money, and who depended on an allowance from Paley, and on keeping his generosity (and his reason for it) quiet. It reveals a Lulu as averse to risk as the rest of the world:

> In writing the history of a life I believe absolutely that the reader cannot understand the character and deeds of the subject unless he is given a basic understanding of that person's sexual loves and hates and conflicts. . . . I too am unwilling to write the sexual truth that would make my life worth reading. I cannot unbuckle the Bible Belt.

LOUISE BROOKS BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Paris reads that as the wish to protect Paley and a few others. But I suspect that Brooks had just as powerful a need to safeguard her own imagined prowess. Her discretion allows the league of lovers to mount; it smacks of sex in the head, wherever else it may have thrived; and the casual admission that it was all too racy to utter betrays a publicity genius. She writes rather the way her mother looks: clever but prim, and raised on the innocent side of 1920. It's not easy to hear that voice yielding to sexual candor. Whereas, in any of her photographs or movies, the idea of sensuality oozed out of Brooks, like moisture in mud beneath a heavy tread. In pictures, Brooksie aroused desire. The woman of the second coming, however, yearned to be an intellectual, worthy of her own cult. When she talked dirty, it was as if she had boned up on good lit crit beforehand; more hardbacks than hard ons.

She turned on Tynan once, whipping him up and beating him down at the same time: "Are you a variation of Jack the Ripper, who finally brings me love that I'm prevented from accepting—not by the knife but by old age?" Of course she dropped Tynan, and he was dead from emphysema, their shared malady, years ahead of her. He had ventured to propose a film about her life, and she had recoiled violently. The horror of being played by another actress! He had done so much for her that she needed to reject him. There is a pattern that Paris glimpses without developing: the neurotic self-destructive who savages her own best chances to prove that she is not a plaything. There was a perverse streak in Brooks. I do not mean that she was a lesbian (though she was one when it amused her to be one, and—more important, perhaps—when it alarmed men and public opinion). She lost two husbands, two movie careers, the life of a dancer, and any hope of security. But she did not so much lose them as repel them. I wonder if she could ever lend herself to thorough companionship, or share in intimacy.

Paris recounts an astonishing story that speaks to her lack of attachment. For many years Brooks was the mistress of millionaire George Marshall. (She turned down the Jean Harlow role in *Public Enemy* just to be with Marshall.) In 1932 she faced the humiliation of bankruptcy proceedings; she owed $12,000, and had only her clothes as possessions. Marshall, apparently, saw no way of rescuing her. Yet after the bankruptcy hearing, she went off with him to Bermuda. To fuck and forget? Was she so set on the parable of her own downfall, so removed from help or sympathy? Did she never know how to take care of

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herself, or did she see prudence as a kind of cowardice? No biography can answer such questions. Paris sometimes looks stranded in the attempt. Brooks took great care to cover her tracks. Paris has tried hard, and done a decent, entertaining, useful job: there will be nothing more complete or frightening, unless James Card writes it.

So, in the end, we are left with what we had when we began: with *Pandora's Box*. It is enough. Some of Brooks's other films are interesting and appealing, but they are not in the same class as that death trap. Paris may not fully appreciate how much Brooks jolted her director Pabst, though he is very good on what the film owes to Wedekind's Lulu plays. Lulu is as natural and as mortal as flame; she is the life force. But she is as helpless and as destroyed as time, a child who could devour Flowers, Feathers, and all respectability, and still scream for more. She is beautiful and she is terrible.

All we can say is that Brooks rose to the role—and may have been more alarmed than she could ever admit. There is no more influential performance in screen history; no silent film so up to date; no movie better appreciated in hindsight. Brooks is not even a good actress all through it. But acting is not the point; and only an hour of it establishes her as a landmark, as a wanton presence provoked by the idea of being seen. She is the obscure object of desire whose mystery falls away when she recognizes the nature of voyeurism. That is what her smiles means. She knows that we have all become dirty, fearful watchers. That is why the film has to kill her at the end, so that feeble, vain, mendacious order may proceed.

But she made that discovery in a picture. In life, she had to live out painful years, in bitterness and the grim comfort of a rueful solitude. That she handled it so well was Louise Brooks's great achievement as a person. But finally she was never much persuaded by the benefits of being real. She wanted to be a face and an idea; and as the years pass, the fascination of that face and that idea only grows greater. She gave up the ghost to be looked at. So far, the gamble has worked. She has survived her own best biography. She is still out there, up there, as cold and as strange as the moon.

DAVID THOMSON's new novel, *Silver Light*, will be published in the spring by Knopf. He is working on the life of David O. Selznick.

God's Dandy

BY FREDERICK BROWN

The Road From Decadence: From Brothel to Cloister Selected Letters of J. K. Huysmans translated and edited by Barbara Beaumont

(Ohio State University Press, 264 pp., $40)

Joris-Karl Huysmans was 33 when, on March 15, 1881, he confided to Edmond de Goncourt: "If I had an ambition to write, it is to your books that I owe it; it was your novels that were the first to grip me, and it is to them that I always return in hours of sadness, for they alone exude the intimate melancholy of existence." Huysmans had more than one literary father, but his tribute otherwise rang true. Connoisseurs of morbid psychology and lovers of unfashionable art, both novelists challenged bourgeois taste from the gutter of realism and the ivory tower of aestheticism, writing about *les bas fonds* in purple prose. Misogynists, both regarded woman as fatal to the creative enterprise. Allied at one point with Emile Zola, whose passion for social justice they didn't share, both renounced the hurly-burly to live quasi-hermetic lives, Goncourt in a private museum, Huysmans under a sacerdotal umbrella.

When all was said and done, however, these kindred souls sought very different rewards. Through his journal, in which confrères more talented or celebrated than he (notably Flaubert) are flayed, Goncourt hoped to gain ascendancy over an age that had not given him his due. Huysmans opted for discretion, on the other hand, instructing his literary executor Lucien Descaves, who proved loyal indeed, to keep his letters and his private papers hidden. Not until Descaves died in 1949 did biographical research become feasible, and even today much correspondence remains unpublished. Barbara Beaumont has drawn upon every available source for this intelligently edited and well-translated selection, which will help readers of *A Rebours* (*Against Nature*) discover the man behind the novel that epitomizes fin-de-siècle decadence.

Long before Thomas Mann in *Tonio Kröger* and André Gide in *Si le grain ne meurt* portrayed the artist as a sport of nature or a hybrid of temperamental opposites, Huysmans declared that he was "the inexplicable amalgam of a refined Parisian and a Dutch painter." Refined though she undoubtedly was, Malvina Badin, a schoolteacher, chose someone more refined than herself in marrying Godfried Huysmans, a lithographer and a miniaturist, whose Catholic family had supplied Protestant Holland with competent painters since the 16th century. Their son, christened Charles-Georges, arrived three years later, in February 1848, on the eve of the bloody revolution that dethroned Louis-Philippe. After this debut, his early childhood was unremarkable, except for sojourns with kinfolk in Holland. Growing up near Saint-Sulpice, playing at the Luxembourg Gardens, and cleaving to his father, who earned a livelihood illustrating missals, he enjoyed perfect security until Godfried's health began to fail. Malvina lost countenance as the specter of economic ruin advanced upon the household, bitter quarrels ensued, and little Georges found himself thrust aside. When Godfried Huysmans died in 1856, leaving his family destitute, the boy had already learned what it meant to fall from grace.

Another calamity followed on the heels of Godfried's death. Seven months into widowhood, Malvina married a gentleman named, implausibly enough, Jules Og, who brought with him not only a modest fortune but two young daughters. Infuriated by her betrayal, Georges was promptly exiled to boarding school where, like Charles Baudelaire damning the perfidious Madame Aupick (ex-Baudelaire) from his cell at lycée Louis-le-Grand, he suffered agonies of loneliness. "To think that there have been people who look back upon their high-school days nostalgically! I'll have none of it! As unhappy as I may be, I'd sooner croak than relive that barracks life, endure the tyranny of fists bigger than mine, the ignoble rancor of student monitors!"

It was, as he put it, a "glacial childhood," and the slight thaw of Sunday dinners at home with his prosthetic family made internment at school feel even colder. This regime lasted nine years, during which he struggled to piece together a self worth saving from the shat-

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tered past. Mementos of father, or of Holland, became identity papers for him. When in due course he embarked upon a literary career, he styled himself Joris-Karl (Georges-Charles). As a regular museum-goer, he found emotional solace in Dutch landscapes. And the talisman he took to his grave was a copy of Zurburan's *Monk*, painted by Godfried Huysmans.

The thin, gangly blond lad who left the lycée Saint-Louis equipped with classical baggage but with no destination or compass went where Malvina pointed. As Monsieur Og had two doweries to nurture, she resolved that her son should seek employment and work his way through law school. Thus Huysmans became, like grandfather Badin before him, a government functionary, copying documents at the Ministry of the Interior by day, loitering at student cafés after dark, and studying torts when not otherwise occupied. "I haunted the Latin Quarter," he wrote:

> and there I learned, among other things, to take some casual interest in students who regularly expectorated their political ideas over mugs of beer and to sample the works of George Sand and Heine, of Edgar Quinet and Henry Murger. This lasted a year. I matured gradually. The electoral battles of the late Empire didn't touch me, for being neither a senator's son nor an outlaw's, I had only to follow, under any regime, the tradition of mediocrity and shabbiness in which my family was steeped.

Still sentimental enough to love Henry Murger, whose *Scènes de la Vie de Bohème* enjoyed a considerable vogue (it went on to enjoy a greater vogue through Puccini's *La Bohème*), he set up house with a young vaudeville actress, about whom it is known only that during their brief time together she bore someone else's child. What eventually came of this conjugal episode, which whet his appetite for self-degradation even as it made him yearn for something else, was a novella titled *Marthe*.

In 1867, soon after Malvina lost her second husband, Huysmans quit law school. Repudiating the professional ambitions to which she had pledged him, he withdrew into the cocoon of France's immense bureaucracy, where no one much cared whether he read *Les Fleurs du Mal*, haunted Left Bank brothels, or tried his hand at art criticism. He led an altogether gray, punctual life until war broke out. Mobilized, he spent more time in hospitals bedridden with dysentery than at the front, but subsequently he endured the terrible siege of Paris, which lasted four months and visited starvation on millions. What he didn't endure was civil war, for the Provisional Government required functionaries to live at Versailles in May 1871 when, during the week known ever since as *la semaine sanglante*, French troops invaded the capital and slaughtered some 25,000 or 30,000 Communards.

Huysmans had felt less marginal in the famished fortress-city than in the well-fed metropolis. Driven by an imagination that thrived on hermetic ritual, on sado-masochistic grotesquery, on legends of depravity and martyrdom, on dreams of mankind losing all regard for law and casting itself adrift, he began a novel about Paris under siege called *La Faim* (*Hunger*). Unable to organize this ambitious work, which never progressed beyond a first chapter, he fashioned prose poems instead, as if the middle ground between epic and miniature offered no purchase.

"A skillfully cut jewel from the hand of a master goldsmith" is how one critic described *Le Drageoir aux Epices* when it was published at its author's expense. Literary Paris gave Huysmans scant notice, but the book recommended him to art magazines, for which he then wrote *transpositions d'art*, or descriptive exercises based on masterpieces in the Louvre. Like Godfried, Joris-Karl became something of a copyist, and one has reason to suppose that his mimetism did not end there. After reading *Manette Salomon*, a Goncourt novel whose artist-hero is emasculated by a vulgar Jewish concubine, Huysmans produced *Marthe*, whose poet-hero is betrayed by a gutter-snipe he rescued from the police.

Survival meant compartmentalization. Just as the impeccable civil servant arranged to publish *Marthe* in Belgium lest it cost him his job under the conservative regime nicknamed l'Ordre Moral, so the fastidious author quarantined his "baser" self in a Belgium of the mind lest it render him impotent. For years Huysmans enjoyed physical intimacy with a dressmaker who had two illegitimate children. But Anna Meunier was always kept unofficial. Seeing her at prudent intervals on appointed days, he found regular companionship among young men, all of whom applauded literature that cocked a snook at the aesthetic conventions, psychological stereotypes, and social pieties upheld by officialdom. However disingenuous this arrangement, there was nothing for it, as nothing could help him reconcile body and mind, or instinct and culture—not even the death of his "refined" mother.

Malvina died just before his first novel appeared. Soon thereafter he met Zola in what proved to be a momentous encounter. Having won fame with *L'Assommoir*, Zola used it to promote naturalism, and Huysmans, who craved solidarity as loners will, became his most vociferous apostle. Already *plus catholique que le pape*, he trumpeted the faith in public and in private. "You said it—I am a realist of the school of Goncourt, Zola, and Flaubert etc," one letter begins:

> In Paris there is a small group of us convinced that the novel can no longer be a story that is more or less true, more or less dressed up, coated in fish paste like certain pills, to mask the taste. By realism we mean the patient study of reality, achieving an overall impression detail by detail, cruel ones if need be, trivial even, if that helps us to strike the right note. As you can see, we are far removed from the days of Alexandre Dumas' novels.

Stating this more crudely is a letter written to Paul Alexis, Zola's future biographer, which also reveals the *Homo duplex* sickened by the very sights and scents that aroused him. "For like you, I want what is true to life, and I am weary of sentimental stupidities, and all those troubadours who celebrate lifeless women who have no vaginas or backsides!" he declared in 1879, several days after the two had attended a masked ball:

> We want what is alive, and what do we care if the prudery of fools is enraged and they accuse us of immorality? Anyway, I don't know what immorality is, and I don't care! Ah, you say you were in a melancholy mood when you left me the other evening. Well, you have no idea of the strange night that female dressed up as a soldier had in store for me. Just think, those two wretched women that I carted about in a damned cab lived in a foul slum. When you went in it smelt of Brussels sprouts and dirty washing. And all you could hear was snoring on every side, the walls being simply laths. Added to that there was only one bed, and so as the pianist could get some rest, we had to put a mattress on the floor—it was pitiful. There were not even any sheets, such wretchedness! Basically, I found it more interesting than some luxurious haunt. And the girl was a good sort, well built with a strong back, quite fiery and sensual, so that the throbbing of her thighs compensated somewhat for my disgust at the lodgings. But, damn it all, in the morning the two girls were snoring with their mouths open and their bare feet showing; I fled at daybreak in a state of sadness. The slovenliness of such poverty was unspeakable. There you are—when will I be able to give you *Marthe?*

On other occasions Huysmans reconnoitered Paris in Zola's way, pen in hand rather than penis at the ready, following agents from the Criminal Investigation Bureau or Sûreté Générale, to which he was now attached. Tormented by self-doubt, he wrote fitfully but wrote nonetheless, and found in Zola, who had his

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own demons to exorcise, a surrogate father. "Huysmans simply must keep on working," the latter told a mutual friend, "and you must let him know it. He is our hope; he has no right to abandon his novel just when the group needs new books." *Les Soeurs Vatard*, *En Ménage*, *A Vau-l'Eau* (the Céline-like story of a pathetic, middle-aged functionary whose Holy Grail is a decent chophouse), and essays on Impressionism all appeared between 1876 and 1883.

His social circle widened. There were frequent soirées at Médan, outside Paris, where Zola owned a spectacularly unhandsome villa. There were monthly dinners at the Café Procope, where Naturalist groupies convened around the master. And more than once Flaubert had him join Goncourt, Daudet, Zola, and Turgenev at his pied-à-terre for Sunday afternoon chats that divulged another kind of reality. "The sad thing is, these people all hate one another," he informed a Belgian friend. "Flaubert runs down Goncourt, Goncourt knocks Flaubert, both use Zola as a whipping-boy behind his back. What blessings! It makes one want to bolt one's door and stay at home! Still, it looks as if it has always been thus and that we have been simpletons in believing great men incapable of baseness; so let us say no more about it."

But this collective bustle, which included plans for a weekly review called *La Comédie Humaine*, did very little to alleviate his sense of futility. The phrase "nothing new here" recurs throughout, like a muffled shriek. "Life continues its monotonous way, its drizzle of sewage," he wrote on April 18, 1882. "We need to invent some new vice in order to amuse ourselves; unfortunately the canon of vices is even more limited than that of the virtues, so what is left? Sleep—but that is rather monotonous too. If you discover a means of preventing boredom, do let me know." And again: "Nothing new apart from that. I have been completely out of sorts for the last week. Neuralgia has seized hold of me, and I spend my time with opium patches on my temples, quinine pills in my pockets, and I am doing no work!"

While Zola rejoiced in the general prosperity, writing one best seller after another, Huysmans, whose nerves were insulted by evidence of France's "Americanization," consoled himself with *The World as Will and Idea*, and he recommended it to his protector as a gospel for non-believers:

> Just think that it is the theory of resignation, absolutely the same as in *The Imitation of Jesus Christ*, minus the future panacea, which is replaced by a spirit of patience, the decision to accept everything without complaint. . . . I know that you do not believe in pessimism, . . . but given the impossibility for intelligent people to believe in Catholicism, these ideas are certainly the most comforting, the most logical, the most obvious there are. Basically, if one is not a pessimist, there remains only to be either a Christian or an anarchist.

Something very new indeed, at any rate something that caught Zola unawares, was *A Rebours*, the novel through which Huysmans voiced his despair. Built around one character, a jaded aristocrat named Des Esseintes who, under Baudelaire's influence, makes his suburban villa an "artificial paradise" where fantasy reigns supreme, it parodies not only nature but Naturalism. With such pains as Zola and company took to document social milieus, Huysmans catalogued the esoteric bric-a-brac of a world outsidethis world, picturing in Des Esseintes a Christless Christian for whom perversion spells transcendence. "Implanting an extra-human ideal in this soul of his, . . . the Christian religion had also urged upon him an unlawful ideal of voluptuous pleasure; licentious and mystical obsessions mingled in his haunted brain, which stubbornly yearned to escape life's vulgarities and, beyond hallowed custom, to experience new and original ecstasies, paroxysms divine or infernal, but consuming equal quantities of sulphur."

Huysmans, who still relied upon Zola, assured him that "[I] expressed ideas diametrically opposed to my own," that "I had this crazy book in my head, I released it and there is an end to it!" But in fact *A Rebours* turned out to have been more a portent than a catharsis. Des Esseintes was the first of several misanthropic recluses stranded between heaven and hell. Abjuring Zola's ideal of rational or scientific enquiry, Huysmans gravitated toward a literary fringe where very different isms—Symbolism, Catholicism, Wagnerianism, occultism—held sway.

Stéphane Mallarmé entered his purlieu, along with Villiers de l'Ile-Adam, a poverty-stricken count much admired by addicts of the macabre or supernatural for his *Contes Cruels*. He befriended the novelist Léon Bloy, a rabid convert given to heaping obloquy on Republican France, and helped Paul Verlaine stay alive between binges that left him utterly destitute. When, midway through 1887, he began *Là-Bas*, which features the 15th-century child murderer-cum-satanist Gilles de Rais, his research took him further afield, into the cenacles of people who practiced devil worship. "I am still hacking away," he wrote on July 24, 1890:

> My infamous priest is exquisite. He is working prodigiously on my behalf, providing me with the most stupefying information about Satanism in our time. On this point I have been condemned to death by the Rosicrucians, one of the recent Satanic sects founded in France!!! In magic any secret revealed is lost, and they are trying to stop my book coming out. Needless to say that, despite the sympathetic magic and poisons aimed at my person, I am quite well! Fr Boullan, it is true, maintains he is defending me against them. . . . I am no longer going off to Honfleur in October . . . but to Lyons to my priest. I shall see unheard-of things there. There is a woman who is a *voyante* in the household, and birds of prey that indicate by their call and their flight the attacks directed against the priest and against me. You can see, it is well worth my going to these people, who are summoning me with loud cries. It is, my friend, the Middle Ages in full swing, plus the religion of the Holy Spirit, of the Paraclete, the religion of Joachim of Fiore, the Middle Ages in action; that is something to dream about these days!

Some years later Huysmans learned from secret diaries that in the 1860s, before Pius IX defrocked him, Father Boullan had held black masses under cover of a "Society for the Reparation of Souls," and that during one such mass he had killed a child borne him by his visionary mistress, Sister Adèle Chevalier. In Lyons this thaumaturgist never at a loss for devotees presided over another flock as John the Baptist reincarnate, staging kabbalistic rites while preaching redemption through fornication.

Huysmans couldn't quite persuade himself that his favorite brothel, "The Bale of Straw" on rue Mazarine, might be a springboard to Paradise, but he did burn Boullan's tablets of exorcistic paste when suffering migraines induced by (among other oral exercises) fellatio, ward off hexes with magical incantations, draw defensive circles on the floor, press the blessed scapular of the Elijan Carmel against his body, and behave altogether so strangely that neighbors thought him mad. Thanks to Boullan, who helped suborn his critical faculties, the "impossibility for intelligent people to believe in Catholicism" no longer seemed the obstacle it had been in 1884. Led by a des-

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perate need of some paternal figure invested with the authority to punish him, to absolve him, to master him, to indoctrinate him, Huysmans cultivated an aptitude for believing what he found absurd, or believing it *quia absurdum*.

Through black magic, the perpetual catechumen embraced white. After much hesitation, Huysmans sought out one Arthur Mugnier, a curate at the Church of St. Thomas Aquinas near rue du Bac, where he had gone to school. "Two weeks ago on Thursday, you saw me quite dumbfounded," he wrote in June 1892:

> I was trembling in fact at the idea of going and knocking on God's door, going myself to his house. Even now I am not very confident, but still, I am hoping. I have been struggling with myself for two years now. During that time, there has been a series of ups and downs, with my soul in a constant state of flux. I have been able to get the upper hand, at least I think so, but have found these struggles singularly painful. You who have always had Faith, if only you knew what it is like to get it back! In fact I am so weary, so truly disgusted with my life, that it is impossible for Him not to have mercy!

A retreat among Trappists was the cure that Mugnier urged upon Huysmans, whose works had by then earned great notoriety at home and abroad. (Oscar Wilde tipped his hat to *A Rebours* in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.) Accordingly, he spent one week at a Cistercian monastery outside Rheims and brought himself to make confession.

But Huysmans remained Huysmans, penance notwithstanding. A tortuous road lay ahead; and his letters and novels (*En Route*, *La Cathédrale*, *L'Oblat*) describe it. He longed for monastic retirement, but like Des Esseintes refusing to visit England lest the real thing sully his ideal image, he discovered, in casing monasteries all over France, that none resembled the aesthetic asylum of his dreams. This quest lasted several years, whereupon a compromise suggested itself. In 1898 he began the 12-month novitiate that made him an oblate consecrated to the Benedictine brotherhood at Ligugé, near Poitiers.

Half layman, half monk, he had hardly worn his new alias when the Waldeck-Rousseau government doomed religious orders for having propagated anti-republicanism during the Dreyfus affair. How Huysmans felt about Jews and the republic is quite clear. His obsession with Grünewald's grotesquely martyred Christ did not prevent him from wanting Dreyfus crucified. He had breath enough after reciting the psalms of the Holy Office every day to mutter imprecations against *les youtres* ("kikes").

The *youtres* included gentile Dreyfusards, and particularly Zola, but the latter's death in 1902 revived something of Huysmans's old feeling for a man who had given him succor. "These deaths stir up the old ashes and, when I think about it, I am seized by an immense sadness and a horror of our times that is becoming more acute," he lamented. "I do not know if our generation was very brilliant, but at least we loved art in a disinterested sort of way." Edmond de Goncourt also spoke to him from beyond the grave. Having been named founding president of the Académie Goncourt, Huysmans, always the martyr, was required during his last years to immerse himself once again in profane literature. This he did dutifully until, in 1907, when he turned 59, his Father called him home.

FREDERICK BROWN teaches at SUNY at Stony Brook and is writing a biography of Emile Zola.

CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 6*

prehensive approach toward bringing our structures up to seismic safety standards. A 1981 federal study concluded that an 8.3 earthquake will hit the city by the end of the century, causing up to 14,000 deaths. The people of Los Angeles, well-acquainted with this danger, have responded with a willingness to bear part of the financial burden to pay for these critical ounces of prevention.

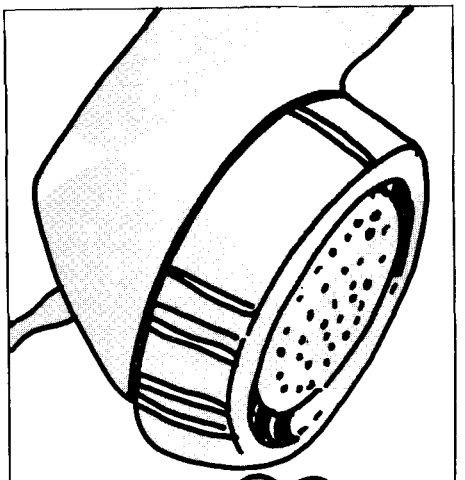
RICHARD ALATORRE
Councilman, 14th District
Los Angeles, California

Frank standards

To the editors:

In cases like Morton Kondracke's appeal for fair play for Barney Frank ("In Defense of Barney," October 9), it is useful to apply the Helms Test, which is to ask, "What would be the reaction of the l*b*r*l community if Senator Helms were accused of the same conduct?" In this instance, we can easily imagine the warm tar, the feathers, the mob howling, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Sadly, it was the l*b***ls who wrote the Kennedy Rules, also known as "mindless assassination." Remember Raymond Donovan, Edwin Meese, Robert Bork. Even more sadly, the l*****ls have promoted as national saints such moral heroes as Gary Hart, and now those twin pillars of the House, Frank and Studds. The l******s deserve their share of the slings and arrows.

R. ALAN WITHERSPOON
Sharonville, Ohio



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CALIFORNIA DIARIST

Rich but dumb

IN THE FIVE YEARS I LIVED IN Beverly Hills before departing for college, I never laid eyes on either of my next-door neighbors. You probably think this is an exaggeration. It isn't. It's true that in high school I would occasionally see two kids who lived in the house to our right. But to this day I couldn't tell you what their parents looked like. All I knew was that their father had gotten rich inventing Mad Libs, those little storybooks where children fill in blanks with incongruous (usually scatological) phrases, read them back, and collapse into giggles. I didn't even know that much about the people who lived to our left. Because land is so expensive in Beverly Hills, the houses stand closer together than in most pricey suburbs. To mitigate this awkward proximity, people surround their homes with tall cypress trees and other vegetation. The greenery was so thick where we lived that over-the-fence neighborly pleasantries were an impossibility. Ours was a heavily traveled street with no sidewalks, so walking to a neighbor's house to, say, borrow a cup of sugar was a fairly hazardous proposition. Anyway, we didn't.

I MENTION ALL THIS SO YOU'LL understand why I'm inclined to view rising concern that Beverly Hills is losing its community spirit as a bit of a joke. That said, I'll concede that on a visit home for Thanksgiving I did notice that things had gotten worse. Woolworth's fled the business district years ago. The supermarkets made a more recent exodus. Now even the gourmet shops can't seem to hack it. As food stores disappear, they are replaced by art galleries decked with misanthropic canvases vaguely reminiscent of Francis Bacon. And expensive restaurants. And insanely expensive clothing stores. I can remember when nobody outside Los Angeles had heard of Rodeo Drive. It was ritzy, of course, but its aspirations were kept in check by the presence of a tacky Polynesian restaurant called The Luau. Now The Luau is gone and Rodeo Drive is a tourist attraction. My new favorite example of Rodeo Drive decadence is a sign for a charity event that I spotted in a store window. On the Friday after Thanksgiving, Santa Claus would be available to be photographed—with your pets. Communism may be collapsing in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, but there are still certain societies that can only be understood through the prism of Marxian analysis.

I'M A CAPITALIST, BUT I BELIEVE that some people have too much money. How much is too much is a question I'll wrestle with for the rest of my life (ratcheting my calculations upward, of course, as my own income rises). The traditional argument for redistribution of wealth is that haves should get less so that have-nots can get more. But there's another reason to favor it: like sunshine, money is a good thing you can get too much of. The harmful effects of excessive wealth may not be as obvious as skin cancer, but they're no less real. At Beverly Hills High School it was widely recognized that the smartest kids came from south of the railroad tracks—a neighborhood that was rich compared with the rest of America, but poor compared with the rest of Beverly Hills. I don't mean to suggest that money makes you stupid. Everybody knows that children are more likely to achieve scholastic distinction if they grow up in a middle- or upper-middle-class environment. But where bourgeois comfort shades into upper-class luxury, this trend reverses itself. I'd estimate the educational benefits of wealth level off at incomes around $150,000. A decline ensues that becomes a serious nosedive somewhere in the neighborhood of $500,000. Our culture recognizes the problem in the stereotype of the Dumb Spoiled Rich Kid. (J. Danforth Quayle is today's best flesh-and-blood example.) It's time our economists gave it some thought too.

ONE WAY THE FEDERAL GOVERNment could help would be to raise income tax rates for the superrich. An oddity of the current tax code is that it is progressive only for families earning up to $185,000; if you earn more, your tax rate falls from 33 to 28 percent. (Before the 1986 tax reform, the top rate was 38 percent.) Unfortunately, the only politician to make a big stink about this regressive quirk was Jim Wright, and you saw what happened to him. Why don't the limousine liberals of Hollywood take it up? They pride themselves on being more progressive than most Democrats, and nothing should upset a true progressive more than seeing a rich man pay less in taxes than a poorer one. While they're at it, they should also take a closer look at George Bush's proposed capital gains cut. Capital gains was big news this fall as the Senate attempted to keep it from coming to a floor vote. Congressional leaders struggling to prevent defections by conservative Democrats would surely have found it helpful if the West Coast political moneybags had spread the word that they wouldn't tolerate such blatant giveaways to the rich. But instead they turned their attention to trendier issues such as abortion and the Brazilian rain forests. Could it be that liberal movie stars have quietly sided with the economic royalists on issues affecting their own pocketbooks?

I READ RECENTLY THAT SPIKE LEE is annoyed that none of the critics who predicted his movie *Do The Right Thing* would cause race riots are stepping forward to admit they were wrong. He has a point. Aside from the Malcolm X quotation at the end, the film didn't advocate black separatism so much as depict it as a reality of ghetto life. I thought about Lee on the day after Thanksgiving when I took my nephews and niece to see the new Disney movie, *The Little Mermaid*. You may remember the Hans Christian Andersen story on which it's based. An adolescent mermaid falls in love with a handsome prince whom she saves from drowning. She gives her beautiful voice to an evil sea witch who turns her fish tail into a pair of legs. If the mermaid can make the prince marry her, she will live as a mortal. She goes to the prince, but he doesn't recognize her without her voice. He marries someone else, and the mermaid dies. Not surprisingly, the original is considerably darker than the Disney version. The Andersen story is a parable about sexual awakening. When the mermaid loses her tail it's "like being pierced through by a sharp sword," and as the mermaid walks on land her feet are bloodied. These racy details were eliminated from the movie. Instead, the Disney folks have turned *The Little Mermaid* into a rousing celebration of cultural assimilation. The sea is ethnic identity, as personified by an engaging Jamaican crab named Sebastian. The land is the majority culture, as personified by the WASP prince. Sebastian makes the best case he can for ethnic solidarity in a charming song called "Under the Sea," in which the ocean floor is transformed into a steel band; but still the mermaid chooses to become a land-dweller. In the end, she does not die, but instead recovers her voice and marries her prince. Is Disney's creation a self-hating mermaid? Some will undoubtedly say so. But I think the freedom to choose your destiny is one of the things that makes America great. We live in a country where two boys named Michael Eisner and Jeffrey Katzenberg can grow up to run one of America's great white-bread institutions, the Walt Disney studios. Maybe someday a Spike Lee can attain that dream too.

TIMOTHY NOAH

Timothy Noah is a Washington writer.

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